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AN EYE-WITNESS IN MANCHURIA

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AN EYE-WITNESS IN MANCHURIA

BY

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PREFACE

A FEW words by way of preface may possibly save the readers from misconception regarding the scope and nature of the following narrative. In the first place, I would say that the book is in no wise concerned either with the causes or with the possible consequences of the war between the empires of Russia and Japan. In it, so far as was possible, political questions of every kind have been left untouched. I have made no attempt to write a complete history of this great and as yet unfinished war, being of opinion that the time for any such attempt to be made, with any reasonable hope of success, is still distant.

What I have endeavoured to set forth here is a simple record of personal experience gained during nine months spent with the Russian Army in Manchuria. Having followed and studied the campaign as a soldier, I have striven to give here a straightforward account of the many stirring events which came within my own actual experience; this without extenuation or disguise, and, assuredly, without malice.

Throughout my stay in Manchuria I was hospitably welcomed and most kindly entreated by all ranks of the Russian Army, from general to private

soldier. It is with the desire to make some slight acknowledgment of the real debt of gratitude owing to my hosts that I have taken leave to dedicate this outcome of my stay among them, to the Officers and Men of the Russian Army in Manchuria.

To the authorities in St. Petersburg and elsewhere I also desire to express here my sense of obligation for the unfailing courtesy they have shown to me.

Finally, I wish to thank Mr. Frank R. Cana, F.R.G.S., for the valuable assistance he has given me in preparing this book for the press.

BROOKE.

TO THE

OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE RUSSIAN ARMY
IN MANCHURIA

IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF THEIR

KINDNESS AND HOSPITALITY

AND WITH THE

DEEPEST ADMIRATION FOR THEIR

COURAGE AND FORTITUDE

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AN EYE-WITNESS IN MANCHURIA

CHAPTER I

THE START FOR THE FRONT

FROM Moscow to Mukden by the long thin thread of iron which links Manchuria to Russia is a distance of some 5500 miles. This single thread is the only highway to the East which Russia commands; over it must pass not only the hosts who go to battle at the bidding of the Tsar, but also the men whose more humble duty it is to chronicle the doings of the army in the field. On the 2nd of May 1904, with a commission to represent Reuter's Agency, and provided with the necessary permits from the military authorities, which a day's delay in St. Petersburg had secured, I started for the front. The first great blow in the land campaign had just been struck—the Japanese troops were already across the Yalu—but of this there was no hint when we left Moscow. My fellow-travellers included several Russian officers, one or two accompanied by their wives, the Danish

Naval Attaché, and three other war correspondents —among them Mr. Maurice Baring of the *Morning Post*, whose perfect command of Russian constituted him interpreter-in-chief for his English comrades. Several officers of the Indian army, living in Moscow for the purpose of learning Russian, came to bid us farewell, and their God-speeds and those of Major Grove, the British Consul, rang in our ears as we left behind the gilded domes of the Kremlin.

It was evening when we started our long journey. On the morrow we found ourselves passing through a great plain still partly covered with its winter mantle of snow—fine agricultural land dotted with log-built houses and interspersed with forests of birch and pine; one of the great wheat-producing areas of Russia, a fact to which the many large granaries and windmills testified. On the third day we reached the Urals, which, if not Alpine in their grandeur, present to the eye fatigued by the boundless plain many a picturesque view of rugged rock and bold scarp. The mountains are famed for their mineral wealth, and travellers have the opportunity, of which we took advantage, of buying at the stations strangely wrought figures in stone and iron, beautiful marbles, and precious stones. Passing the pyramid placed to mark the eastern limit of Europe we came down the slopes of the mountains through winding valleys, glad to know we had entered Asia and were now well on our way. Yet there were 3500 miles still to cover before even the frontier of Manchuria

was reached—a long and tedious progress across Siberia. Only those who have made the journey can realise these enormous distances and the stupendous task of maintaining an army in the field six thousand miles from its base and dependent for almost everything on the smooth working of this railway.

The Siberia of one's imagination and Siberia as seen through the windows of a railway carriage are not one and the same. What we did see were endless and almost treeless plains, scored with many rivers; Cossack posts guarding the railway; herds of cattle and flocks of sheep in charge of strange-looking men with Mongol features. The weather became colder and the snow returned. At length to the bare steppes succeeded forest land; the Yenisei was crossed by a bridge over half a mile long, and more than once we struck the great Moscow post-road of pre-railroad days—a true Sorrowful Way, for it is the track of the exiles and convicts; of whom, however, we saw nothing.

If the scenery tended to be monotonous, life on board the train, which was very crowded, presented many points of interest. In the fine corridor trains of the Siberian railway the journey as far as Irkutsk, if not rapid, is comfortable, and was so even in war time. You have your sleeping berth as on a ship, there is a large dining-car, and a well-found bath-room—a welcome luxury on a journey of such a length. The chef, I trust, had the philosophic spirit, for there seemed no regular meal times; one ate

when one felt hungry, which, however rational it may be, is most disturbing to people accustomed to the orderly sequence of meals in an English household. Except for the Danish Attaché and a Russian naval officer, the passengers seemed suspicious of their English companions, and shunned our company. The general conversation was on the prospects of the far-off campaign, of the issue of which the Russians spoke confidently. When we had been eight or nine days travelling, news of the victory of Kuroki on the Yalu reached us. It was evident that the Russian officers were disagreeably surprised, but they never doubted that in time the tide of war would turn in their favour.

Irkutsk at length on the tenth day from Moscow; a meeting point of many roads, a place of evil reputation and of interest to us only as marking the end of the first stage of our journey. Here we had to leave our comfortable train—to bid farewell to the morning tub. At Irkutsk one is close to Lake Baikal, and nearing the goal. A three hours' journey from the town along the banks of the Angara brought us to the quayside. Baikal was before us, that mysterious lake set in a huge cleft between the mountains, whose rocky sides rise almost perpendicularly from the water; that lake which seems to bar further progress eastward. Round its southern end was being built with feverish haste the railway which has since been opened, but for us the journey must be across the water. It was here that we first saw manifest signs of the great struggle. Baikal Station and

pierhead were thronged with all sorts and conditions of people waiting for the steamer which should take them to the opposite shore. Merchants going to Vladivostok, Jews bound for Kharbin, soldiers, civilians—a motley crowd, in which were many women, kept in order by bustling policemen in red-faced uniforms. Sitting on their baggage, with a biting wind blowing down the lake, the throng waited several hours for the boat to start. This gave us an opportunity of examining and admiring a battalion or two of Siberian Rifles who were going to the front. Dressed in long grey coats and wearing *papahas* (large caps made of sheep-skin), they looked fine sturdy fellows, capable men of their hands.

In winter the passage of the lake was made across the ice by sledge, but as soon as the weather permitted, passengers were taken over by steamers specially built to force their way through loose or rotten ice. Of these there were two, the *Baikal* and the *Angara*, both built by Armstrongs on the Tyne. The *Baikal* is made to carry over the train bodily; it was in the other boat that we crossed. The ice was but half-melted; under the rays of a powerful sun its surface was covered with water, but underneath it was still thick. The *Angara* forced her way through without much effort, the ice giving way with a loud crackling noise, an unaccustomed sensation for other than Polar travellers. On our right the winter sledge track was still plainly to be seen, with a half-way house and buffet built of logs, and here and there the carcase of a

horse left lying where it had died of exhaustion in its tracks. We could also see the men at work on the circum-Baikal railway, which now allows the trains to run direct to Kharbin without break of journey, though the quickest way will still be by steamer across the lake. Arrived at the farther end we disembark at Mysovaia Quay, and have to rebook to Manchuria. And here began the real discomfort of the journey. Time-tables bore no resemblance to the times of the running of the trains, and whatever the class of ticket bought, travellers were thankful to be taken on in any fashion and at any hour. Mr. Baring had an excellent servant, Mikhail, an ex-noncom. officer of the Guards whom he had brought from St. Petersburg, and to him we owed much, but now his utmost efforts only succeeded in getting us places in a very dirty third-class carriage; we were perhaps fortunate in getting seats at all. There were several Russian and Greek merchants and a sailor or two in the carriage, but for the most part our companions were soldiers of the Siberian Army. Packed to its utmost capacity it needs little imagination to realise the condition of the atmosphere—it could have been cut with a knife. The journey from Mysovaia to the frontier of Manchuria, through the province of Transbaikalia, lasted nearly four days, and from the scenic standpoint was the most interesting part of all. We had for one thing fairly overtaken the spring, on every hand were signs of returning life, and the fields were carpeted with beautiful flowers. The railway

boldly climbs the Yablonnovy Mountains, fine rugged hills covered with dense forests of pines. Many a brawling stream and larger river was crossed, and at one place we plunged through a short tunnel. It is but the second since Moscow, and bears an inscription "To the Pacific," a phrase which in any other sense than the geographic—if in that—is eminently misleading. Down the eastern slopes of the hills we passed to Chita, the seat of the Governor of the province, a town which left a pleasant impression on the memory.

After Baikal we were continually passing troop trains in sidings—each train packed full of men on their way south to reinforce Kuropatkin, and all, apparently, in excellent spirits, singing generally to the accompaniment of several concertinas—the favourite musical instrument of the Russian soldier. But if the soldiers seemed happy, the Russians who had come with us from Moscow grew more and more suspicious of their English companions, and one civilian in particular endeavoured to impress on the Russian officers the supposed fact that we were Japanese spies! However, among the "common people" we found friends. The soldiers in our carriage did their best to keep it clean, got us tea at every stopping-place, and were genuinely and unobtrusively kind and attentive. They entertained us with folk-lore stories, which much resembled our English fairy tales. Their simple ways and ideas won much on us. Their ignorance of the foe against whom they were to war was great: one soldier asked us if it were true that the

Japanese fought in armour. A sailor, however, who had been out in the East, said he knew and liked the Japanese.

Manchuria Station was reached on the 15th of May, that name being given to the first station reached in Manchuria travelling eastwards. We had now, nominally, entered the Chinese Empire, but of that there was no sign on the railway. We had here once again to break our journey and take fresh tickets for Kharbin. It was necessary, too, to obtain a new permission to proceed, but, thanks to our excellent credentials from St. Petersburg, in this matter we found no difficulty. However, a whole day had to be spent in the crowded station waiting for the train to take us on. We had an opportunity of speaking to several French and German correspondents, and one from America, who drew for us gloomy pictures of the way they had been treated by the press censors, and were with one consent giving up the attempt to chronicle the progress of the war. Undeterred by such faint-hearts, we kept on our way. At night we started for Kharbin in a carriage crammed with people. Our friend, the suspicious civilian, had by this time worked greatly on the fears of the officers. Neither he nor they could understand how we got permission so easily to continue our journey, and finally two soldiers were placed in our carriage to watch the movements of the wicked Englishmen. This much Mr. Baring learned from listening to their talk one to another, and, to contradict the proverb that eavesdroppers never hear anything to their

advantage, he overheard both the men express surprise at having to guard such quiet and inoffensive individuals. But for their guard we owe our suspicious friends many thanks, as during the night most of the occupants of the carriage—a long Pullman car—were robbed of money and valuables, whilst we, being under the jealous eye of our sentries, were unmolested. Moreover, the next day there was even an approach to friendliness on the part of those who had looked most askance upon us. We learnt afterwards that they had telegraphed to Kharbin and received assurance that we were just what we represented ourselves to be and not spies in disguise.

The country we passed through was mainly wide rolling plains; though in the distance the Khingan mountains stand up picturesquely. Crossing the grazing grounds of Mongol nomads the resemblance to the South African veld was very strong. It had not the appearance of country on which a vast army could draw for supplies. It was a relief to us all when, on the 18th of May, we drew up at Kharbin Station, and could feel ourselves at last in touch with the Field Force—within the *hinterland* of the theatre of war.

CHAPTER II

KHARBIN IN WAR-TIME

KHARBIN is a city of mushroom growth; a city, too, of immense possibilities. But a more uninviting spot, as I saw it, would be hard to imagine. In point of repulsiveness, and also of morals, it might fitly be compared with Port Said. The eye of the seer discerns its future commercial and military importance, those less gifted behold at first a sea of mud or a cloud of dust. It was otherwise we had expected to behold the new capital of Manchuria, for the advertising artist is abroad in Russia as well as elsewhere, and from circular and pamphlet, descriptive of the Trans-Siberian Railway, one pictured at least a small Birmingham with all the aids and comfort provided by a go-ahead municipal council. And the reality? The railway station is large, one might say imposing, as becomes such an important junction; for the rest, Kharbin is in the brick and mortar and corrugated iron stage, where everything, one is tempted to say, is vile. Our disillusionment came early, in fact before we left the railway station. In front of us a sea of mud—and the few cabs already engaged by more astute travellers. My companion's surprise at this state of things was

somewhat amusing. "I thought there were electric trams and streets lit by electricity," he blurted out. Nor did Kharbin improve on acquaintance. It is built in detachments and spreads over a very large area. The official quarter stands on a hill, and here there are some really fine buildings, including the offices for the General Staff, the residence of the Viceroy of the Far East, the post-office and headquarters of the Manchurian Railway, and the buildings of the Russo-Chinese Bank. Most of these are solidly built of masonry, and do not give one the impression of a "temporary occupation pending the pacification of the country." In truth the Russians, in the four or five years they have been in possession, have acted as if the place was their own—the advance of the railway has meant for them the advance of their Empire. No traveller in Manchuria could imagine that Russia, who took advantage of the Boxer Rising of 1900 to seize the country, ever entertained the idea of voluntarily restoring it to China.

To return, however, to Kharbin. On lower ground and leading to the river Sungari is the *priestan* or merchants' quarters. The condition of the streets in this part of the town is but slightly indicated by the word filthy. In spring and summer the horses are knee deep in thick black mud; in the autumn, when the mud dries, the dust-storms are as disagreeable as a Cape south-easter or a Johannesburg sand-storm—only more so. Here a corrugated iron shanty and a fine stone-built house jostle one another; buildings spring up with amaz-

ing rapidity, all is life and bustle. There are many hotels with fine-sounding names, but each is more uncomfortable than the others. Bad as they are, they are all dear—dear and dirty. As an antidote to the dirt, one can patronise houses where they give you a bath *à la Russe*. But the chief note of the town is "gaiety"; the drowning in the pleasure of the night all care for the morrow. A circus and two or three theatres found hosts of patrons, but the most notorious of the places of amusement were two large open-air *café chantants*. Of this sort of life the Russian officers took their full share. Champagne flowed freely, nor was the charm of women's society lacking. Indeed, the well-dressed, yellow-haired ladies of Kharbin were both numerous and notorious. Not that they had the monopoly of doubtful reputations in this fine example of Western "civilisation"; many, if not most, of the Russians in business there had spent part of their life in the convict settlements at Saghalien. There were also many Chinese traders in the town, bent on spoiling their conquerors. The morality of the place was far to seek—such at least was Kharbin as I saw it.

We were forced to spend ten days in the town, though at the outset it was only through the kindness of Colonel Potapoff, an officer of the Staff at Kharbin, that we were able to get rooms—which we eventually obtained at the "Oriental," an hotel in the official quarter.

Colonel Potapoff was then Press Censor; he had served with the Boers in South Africa, more,

apparently, from the love of adventure than love for the Boers, and was a charming and open-minded man, whom it was a pleasure to know. His society made the stay in Kharbin more endurable.

What will happen to Kharbin when the Russians leave Manchuria it is difficult to tell, but it can hardly sink back to the insignificance of the village which it was before the advent of the railway. The town is most advantageously situated for the development of commerce and the control of the country to its east. It is unattractive in itself, and situated on a treeless plain stretching south-west to the Gobi Desert, but as an entrepôt has a magnificent situation. The Sungari which flows at its feet is a fine deep stream; already the town is provided with excellent quays and landing-stages; on the bosom of the river are many fine steamers. The Sungari flows north-east to join the Amur, and is navigable in summer, when the ice has melted, all the way down from Kharbin to its confluence with the larger river. Thus by the Sungari and Amur it is possible to go by steamer from Kharbin to Khabarovsk, and even to the trading settlements near the mouth of the Amur, or up that river to, and far above, Blagoveshchensk, that town whence the Chinese residents were driven pell-mell into the water by the Russians—to drown like rats. Kharbin is, too, as already hinted, a great railway centre. From it the main line from Moscow runs east direct to Vladivostok, whilst, as all the world knows, another line goes south through Mukden to Yinkow and Port Arthur. From Yinkow, the

port of Nuichwang, there is another line to Tientsin and Peking. These facts all tend to prove the permanence of Kharbin as a commercial entrepôt into whatever hands its destiny falls. The Russians were well advised in choosing it as the new capital of Manchuria.

As a defensible place, Kharbin has not many advantages besides that offered by the Sungari to a foe approaching from the south. The railway bridge which spans the river is very carefully guarded—or was when I knew the town—both by infantry, and by artillery placed at either end. Indeed, extraordinary precautions were taken to ensure its safety, for, beside the soldiery on guard, two large booms made of massive logs and chains were placed across the river, one above and one below the bridge, all river traffic beneath it being thus prevented. Moreover, the authorities hermetically sealed up all passengers crossing the river, by locking the doors and fastening the windows of each railway carriage, as it passed over. One does not wonder that the various attempts made by Japanese secret agents to destroy the bridge were foiled.

Though most commendable zeal was shown by those responsible for the safety of the bridge, the bulk of the officers in the town treated the war as a thing far off. Their time to fight would come, and they would fight well, but meantime their life was hardly the best possible preparation for the command and control of men on the field of battle —men, too, worthy of the best of leaders.

Living at Kharbin was bad for one's pockets and trying to one's temper, and we were glad when we were permitted to go forward to Mukden. Meantime, we had been joined by Captain Eyres, the British Naval Attaché at St. Petersburg, who was bound for Vladivostok.

CHAPTER III

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF MUKDEN

A JOURNEY of some forty-eight hours took us from Kharbin to Mukden. Colonel Potapoff once more proved himself a friend. Through his good offices Captain Eyres and I were invited to share the carriage reserved for Major-General Daniloff, who was going straight through to Liao-Yang. General Daniloff was most courteous and considerate, a type of the best kind of Russian gentleman as well as soldier. He spoke a little French, and told us he was beginning to learn English. He was enthusiastic at the prospect of going to the front, and was destined to prove, at Liao-Yang and the Sha-Ho, his bravery and capacity to command. As he bade us good-bye at Mukden we exchanged wishes for better acquaintance.

The country between Kharbin and Mukden afforded a delightful contrast with that of the veld-like plains of Northern Manchuria, and the great pine forests of Siberia. We had, too, changed our direction. Instead of facing east we had turned south and had entered a region bounteously blessed by Nature. The spring was more advanced, the sky clear, the air delightful. The scene grew in

beauty with every passing mile. The country was gently undulating, well watered and most carefully cultivated. The young millet tinged the ploughed fields a delicate green, the note of the magpie (this bird accompanied me from the pleasant fields of Normandy to the farthest verge of Manchuria) was constantly in our ears, mingled with the occasional soft cawing of rooks, busy building, or repairing, their nests among clumps of firs which, crowning the smaller hills, half-hid from view temples which Chinese piety had erected for the worship of ancestors. The singing of the birds, the rolling downs and green fields, all reminded one of home; nor was much imagination needed to conceive oneself in Sussex—and yet no Sussex farmhouse would boast such tiny, yet fierce-looking scaly dragons, nor such odd-shaped gargoyles as peeped from the tiled roofs of these quaint Manchurian homesteads. The aspect of the countryside was one of great prosperity and gave unquestionable proof of the industry of the inhabitants. And here let me make a confession. I am not ethnologist enough to distinguish precisely between a Manchu and a Chinese. They dress alike and, in general, look alike. In tackling a "Chinee" one may, like the historic British sailor, "catch a Tartar," but, begging to be pardoned by the *savants*, I shall rarely attempt to distinguish between Mongolian, Manchurian, or Chinese, using, often, the last word to designate all three peoples. The peasantry here, whatever their nationality, were good husbandmen.

To be at Mukden Station and to be in Mukden

City is not quite the same thing. The ancient capital of the reigning dynasty in China was not open to the casual tourist in the days of Kuropatkin. Nor, in fact, is the station in the city. Of set purpose the railway line keeps clear of it. For one thing, the intervening space gives room for the growth of the Russian town—always grouped near to the line—and thus avoids hurting the susceptibilities of the Chinese. And close by Mukden station dwelt the chief press censor, Colonel Pestich, without whose *fiat* no correspondent could go farther. From the colonel I obtained a pass for the city, and found myself one of a cosmopolitan group of Englishmen, Americans, Frenchmen, Danes, Italians, and Germans, all note-taking "chiels." It was here one learned of the very severe censorship regulations, which appeared to prohibit one doing anything. There seemed at anyrate little chance of being permitted to go to the front for some time. Every correspondent was expected to produce not only a photograph of himself to establish identity, but to furnish a guarantee from his Government for his good behaviour. Rivalling the Japanese, as it seems, in the obstructions with which they surrounded the war correspondent, the Russians were as equally polite to their victims—the politeness was absolutely painful. However, as I was to prove, once a correspondent did obtain permission from the Russians to go to the front he had practically *carte blanche*—could go into the firing line and get killed if he chose.

Kharbin, though in Chinese territory, was

essentially a Russian town, where the "Celestial" merchant was treated as a foreigner. But at Mukden things were different. The Chinese city is about two and a half miles from the railway station and Russian quarter, the road between being lined with booths. At the end of the road one reaches a high mud wall, square, and pierced on each side by two gates. Within the walls lie the suburbs, and a mile farther on is a second wall, high, and built of stone, with gates corresponding to those of the outer wall. Inside the stone wall is the city proper, which numbers fully 250,000 inhabitants. In appearance, and in dirt, Mukden, a great commercial mart, is held to resemble closely Peking. The Imperial Palace is the residence of the Tartar Governor-General of Manchuria, a mandarin of high rank, who had under his command 2000 Chinese troops.

"The proper study of mankind is man," and I now had occasion to study life in a Chinese "hotel," fixing my abode in the *Derlungdien*, or Dragon Inn. The inn consisted of a number of separate houses built round a square, and enclosed in a mud and millet-stalk wall. The central space was used for the horses. As for the rooms devoted to the two-footed guests, it cannot be said they abounded in luxuries. Their characteristic article of furniture, if the term be permissible, is the *kang* or bed. Anything more unlike a bed, according to Western notions, it would be hard to discover. As the Russian peasant sleeps on his stove for warmth, so are the *kangs* warmed by fire. They are wide clay platforms, raised two feet or so

above the floor, and extending the whole length of the room. Such inns, indeed, have *kangs* along two and even three sides of the guest rooms. One sleeps with one's feet to the wall, and from the clayey bed, which the wise man covers well with rugs, radiates heat conveyed through holes from the fire which burns in an oven. There be worse resting-places than a Manchurian *kang*. In a laudable endeavour to do the correct thing the war correspondents went one night to the sign of the Peacock, a typical Chinese inn. We were indifferent brave, I dare avow, but to tackle the dinner which the *chef* of the Peacock produced would have required the audacity of a Marshal Ney combined with the appetite of a Dugald Dalgetty. The dishes numbered full forty, and of scarce one could we tell the composition. And to eat with chop-sticks requires practice.

Mukden is not alone a city of the living, but of the dead. The Imperial Tombs are the object of pilgrimage to all visitors. On the 1st of June, the day after my arrival at Mukden, accompanied by Captain Eyres, the Danish Attaché, and an A.D.C. of Admiral Alexeieff, I visited the Western Tombs, which contain the graves of the Ming Dynasty, and are some little distance from the city. To the A.D.C. we were indebted for the loan of horses, mine being a particularly fine animal, resembling almost an English thoroughbred. The Russian officer spoke English perfectly, and to our surprise knew the names of the best horses on the turf in England, talked of the probable winner of the

Derby, and took in both the *Sportsman* and the "Pink Un." The tombs have often been described; worthy monuments of departed rulers as they are, still more interesting is their setting amid firs and pines, by an exquisite little lake, whose surface is covered with magnificent water lilies, and whose banks are hid in masses of blue irises. The Eastern Tombs at Fu-ling, seven or eight miles away, are as finely situated as the Western. Thither went a party of war correspondents one day,—for, if prevented from seeing the fighting, we had the more time to "do the lions,"—and slept in the garden of an inn, the weather being delightful. The day following, after a morning dip in the Hun-ho,[1] we walked over the fir-clad hills on which are the tombs, the red rose and the blue iris giving a glow of brilliant colour in the bright sunshine. It was a veritable Garden of Peace, this wonderful burying-place of ancient kings. To transport oneself in thought to the not distant battlefield, to the opening scenes in the great drama of death and victory, was almost impossible, so strong was the feeling of calm and repose. How changed was the spot when next I saw it!

Admiral Alexeieff, then still in the enjoyment of Imperial favour and Viceroy of the Far East, had his headquarters at Mukden at this time. His Excellency did not mingle much with men of common clay. The Viceregal headquarters were on wheels; the Admiral, in short, lived in a train —magnificently appointed — placed on a siding, around which were several stone buildings dubbed

[1] *Ho* is Chinese for a river.

by the Foreign correspondents "Russia town." Sentries stationed at every fifty yards round headquarters zealously prevented the approach to the Viceroy or his staff of any unauthorised persons—hence its alternative name of "Forbidden City." However, Admiral Alexeieff might occasionally be seen driving. His outward appearance was not undistinguished. Somewhat broad of figure, somewhat advanced in years, his bearded face bore a pleasant expression, and was lit up by the flash of his bright eyes. Altogether he seemed fairly typical of the Bureaucracy. Of his policy and capacity it is not easy to form a just estimate. Towards the Chinese he showed a consideration, possibly born of prudence. He avoided friction with the Tartar Governor of Mukden, and took measures to protect the Imperial Tombs. It was alleged by his staff—perchance they foresaw the need for whitewash—that his voice had been raised against war with Japan, that he had faithfully represented to the Tsar the true state of affairs—Japan's great military strength, Port Arthur's comparative weakness, and the poor *morale* of the navy in Pacific waters; but that he had been overruled in St. Petersburg and rendered a passive instrument of the Grand Ducal party. Be the truth of that matter what it may, there is no doubt that between Alexeieff's staff and that of General Kuropatkin there existed considerable friction, friction that extended to the two chiefs themselves. Such a situation in the face of a united foe calls for no comment.

CHAPTER IV

ABOUT THE HUNHUTZES

DURING the period of waiting at Mukden opportunities were afforded for a study of that irregular fighting force, of uncertain value, which figures repeatedly in the English newspapers as the "Chun-Chunses," but whose proper designation is Hunhutzes, or Red beards, a name derived, one may reasonably hazard, from the beard of a famous leader. The Hunhutzes are indicative of the extent to which Chinese rule in Manchuria fails to maintain law and order. They belong to the profession once adorned by Rob Roy, and which, save in Sicily and Macedonia, seems now dead in Europe,—the Hunhutzes, in short, are mere brigands and leviers of blackmail. For many years they have been the terror of the Chinese merchants and traders in Manchuria, but until the present war never molested Europeans. They are now mending their manners—I have had the honour of being fired at by these gentry. Their usual plan of campaign is to waylay and despoil traders going with goods or treasure to Nuichwang, Peking, or other towns. In the level plains when the millet is high, nothing is easier than to lie in

ambush and pounce on traders ill-provided with escort. For such traders it is better to pay blackmail. The Hunhutzes have a regular office at Mukden, where intending travellers can learn the tariff for insurance against robbery, and, on payment of the requisite sum, receive from the brigand clerk in charge of the bureau a pass which will free them from molestation should his companions "at the front" hold them up.

The Hunhutzes are able thus to brave it out in Mukden because of the patronage of powerful Mandarins, who in their turn blackmail the blackmailers. On the other hand, the Governor is supposed to show zeal in ridding the countryside of these pests, and his zeal is indicated by the number of Hunhutzes decapitated! It was said in Mukden that the number of heads which, in the opinion of Peking, indicated the required amount of zeal was 2000 a year. Certainly executions of five or six men were matters of almost daily occurrence—taken as part of the "common round" —and few, indeed, of the brigands captured left their prison save for torture or the plain outside the walls where the beheadings took place. Torture in China, as is well known, is part of the regular routine of judicial proceedings.[1] Nor is it wise to judge the Chinese too harshly on such a subject. This mode of "examination" was common in Europe a little more than a century ago, and lingers in Russia yet. The Hunhutzes are tor-

[1] It is reported (May 1905) that an Imperial Edict has been published abolishing the use of torture in China.

tured at intervals until they confess their crimes, whereupon they are made to sign their own death warrant. The resisting power of some of the men is marvellous, they have been known to endure torture for one or two years before confession. They know that until confession is made they cannot be killed;—here one may see a curious provision of Chinese justice;—no prisoner must suffer the extreme penalty without having acknowledged the justice of his doom. I was present one day at the yamen of the Mandarin, when certain Hunhutzes were to be tried, and was invited to take a seat on the bench. As in France, the judge acts the part of accuser. A prisoner, rightly or wrongly accused of being a Hunhutze, was brought in. (A good many of the alleged brigands never "covered" a peaceful traveller with a rifle, but when the real article is scarce and the authorities feel that the deficiency must be supplied, numbers of unfortunate people are seized and forthwith clapped in jail as Hunhutzes.) A dialogue to the following purport ensued:—

Mandarin. On such and such a day you held up the honourable merchant Hi Si when on his way to Yinkow, and robbed him of all his goods.

The Prisoner. No, your Excellency, I am innocent. On that day I was at work in the millet field.

Mandarin. You contradict me! Then you say I am a liar.

Whereupon the order is given to torture the wretched man. His wrists were tightly bound with

cord till the flesh was cut, and then a jailer belaboured the back of his hands—his arms being fixed so that they could not be moved—with a bamboo cane. At this point, sick at heart, and fearing that this exhibition of his methods was arranged by the Mandarin for my benefit, I excused myself and left the court. In the calmness of after days one may, as I have sought to, palliate the inflicting of torture, but it is none the less revolting. The Chinese themselves appear indifferent to all this suffering, nay, the very prisoners are phlegmatic. Curious crowds always collected to witness an execution.

Once a prisoner confessed, his doom followed hard. Seated in carts, their hands tied behind them, the condemned men are taken to the place of execution, where they are made to kneel down. For the most part the prisoners are under the influence of opium—when condemned their relatives usually find means to bribe the jailers to allow the victims this last alleviation. Kneeling thus, they await the sword of the executioner. This official is preceded by a man whose duty it is to lift the pigtails of the condemned. This done, one straight, strong stroke—if the swordsman be skilful—and head and body are severed. The last to die do not appear affected by the death of those first beheaded. As the line of living dwindles, the survivors turn their opium-bemused heads curiously, stolidly, to view the proceedings, each seeming to say, with perfect calm, "My turn next." It is not an elevating sight.

The military value of the Hunhutzes is due largely to their intimate knowledge of the country. Though some go on foot, they are usually mounted on strong ponies, are armed with Mausers, and are not deficient either in courage or daring. Both combatants in this war have made use of these Bashi-Bazuks of the Far East, the Japanese more, perhaps, than the Russians. The Hunhutzes wear no uniform, but dress like ordinary peasants, and when hard pressed often elude their pursuers by throwing away their rifles and posing as innocent villagers.

CHAPTER V

FORWARD TO LIAO-YANG

In anticipation of permission to proceed south to Liao-Yang, I had bought a couple of Chinese ponies after much bargaining with many horse-dealers. What subtle influence is it which weakens the moral fibre of those who deal in horse-flesh? The question suggests itself as one recalls the character of those Mukden horse-dealers. No Yorkshire dealer could teach him any fake or trick—he knows them all, and will patch up an old "crock" with the utmost skill, making it show to the greatest advantage. The Chinese pony stands from thirteen to fourteen hands high, and is enormously strong. It thrives on starvation diet, and needs little attention. Its appearance is not prepossessing; it generally has a long, shaggy coat, and its head is suggestive of that of a camel. Nor can its manners on first acquaintance be commended. It is as full of guile and wile as the man you buy it from. You eye it critically—it stands as quietly as a worn-out cab-horse in the Home of Rest at Acton. But try and mount this simple Chinee pony: At once, from every possible and impossible angle, he will bite at and kick at you, and the moment your foot is in

the stirrup off he shoots like a bullet from a rifle. The man who masters him can boast of his horsemanship. This viciousness is probably the result of the cruelty which the Chinese so often show to animals.

Having spent over a fortnight at Mukden, the permit to take the step forward to Liao-Yang was most welcome. Thither, in company with two other correspondents, I went on the 16th of June. It was the day on which the troops sent under General Stackelberg, to relieve Port Arthur, were routed by the Japanese under General Oku at Wa-fang-ho, and as we left Mukden the wounded in the earlier stages of the fight were being brought into the city. The sight was a sad one, but it quickened our desire to reach the front.

Liao-Yang is built on a plain on the left or southern bank of the Ta-tze-ho, a broad but rather shallow eastern tributary of the Liao River, and in appearance is a smaller edition of Mukden, and, like it, is approached from the railway through the new Russian settlement. It boasts a famous and very large pagoda, built to commemorate a great victory gained in an old-time war with Korea—when the children of "the Morning Calm" must have been of more virile make than their descendants of to-day.

In June 1904 the town was the headquarters of the army in the field. Following the example of Admiral Alexeieff, General Kuropatkin had established himself in a train, which, as at Mukden, was kept on a siding surrounded by buildings put

up originally for railway officials, but taken possession of by the Commander-in-Chief's staff. Among the distinguished members of this staff were the Grand Duke Boris, Don Jaime de Bourbon, and Prince Arsene Karageorgevitch, a brother of King Peter of Servia. The General himself, on whom—subject to the control of the Viceroy, Alexeieff—rested the direction of the army, was little seen, being occupied in his railway carriage nearly all day in perfecting plans for the great campaign. The understudy of Skobeloff in Central Asia, the hero of a hundred fights, Kuropatkin held in the esteem of the Russian army a position comparable to that of Lord Roberts in the British army. Outside the *entourage* of the Viceroy there was implicit confidence in his leadership, and he in return believed fully in the worth of the troops under his command. A man a little past the prime of life, of medium height and resolute bearing, the General was very popular with the foreigners at Liao-Yang, who experienced kindness as well as courtesy at his hands.

On every side one saw at Liao-Yang evidence of the conflict being waged away beyond the hills. The place itself was getting ready for battle. As we came down from Mukden we had noted that roads were being made parallel with the railway all the way to Liao-Yang, roads which were to prove so many lines of retreat; though it was to facilitate the advance of the Russians during the rains that they had been constructed. And round Liao-Yang itself, fortification was going on apace.

The large iron railway bridge spanning the Ta-tze-ho, was specially protected. There was no mistaking the fact that Kuropatkin was preparing for a determined stand at this spot. But "the front" was still ahead, and the password we desired was "Forward." So to the press censor we went on the day after our arrival. We had established ourselves in an hotel—the International—which was fairly comfortable, but which boasted such abundance of creeping things, of the species that inspired the genius of Robert Burns, that sleep was impossible. Moreover, three of us had to crowd into one small room, and to complete our pleasure a thunderstorm raged, and the inn yard was converted into a quagmire. What, however, were discomforts, to the prospect of getting to the fighting line? We were in high spirits; but disappointment awaited us, for the censor, Baron Venigen, quickly let us know that, for the time, permission to join any of the advanced columns would not be granted. It was most annoying. I felt like a child prevented by his nurse from eating a rich pudding he particularly fancied, and could almost have followed the child's example, and kicked and screamed from vexation.

One of the unmistakable evidences that a campaign was toward, was the presence in Liao-Yang of the ubiquitous Greek, that keenest of traders and persistent gleaner in the wake of armies in the field. He is to be found in every camp in every clime. In Manchuria I met Greeks whose figures had been familiar in the camps of the British

Army during the Boer War, and who previously had followed the misfortunes of their own countrymen in Thessaly, when Edhem Pasha led on the victorious Turks. They seem always to be hunting in packs, like hungry wolves seeking their prey. They supply the camp with such luxuries as suit both officers and men, and in a trade where sometimes much is risked make huge profits.

The Greek was eloquent in his way of the nearness of battle; passing the railway station, after my disappointing interview with the censor, I saw again, what the day before had been seen at Mukden, the arrival of wounded. It was the sadder side of war, this assemblage of used-up material in the great international struggle. Through roads deep in mud and slush; after the previous night's thunderstorm, a long train of ambulances slowly, painfully, wended its way towards the hospital. The ambulances contained wounded from the army in hills away to the east, where Count Keller and the dashing Cossack General Rennenkampf were opposing—as best they could with insufficient men—the advance of Kuroki. The Japanese had captured Si-mat-ze after a smart fight, and here was some of the Russian wreckage. Pale, tired, sore from their wounds, the men lay in silent pain, having been brought day and night over rough mountain roads down to the valley. At the station itself one met another stream of Russian wounded, remnants from Wa-fang-ho, brought in by a hospital train, painted white and glistening in the sunshine.

Troops going to the front might be seen clustering round the carriages, eagerly questioning their wounded comrades as to the character of the foe they, too, would speedily meet. Close by were pitched many hospital tents fluttering the Red Cross flag, and within were busy doctors and deft nurses fulfilling the law of love, as those they tended had wrought after another law. However, for the moral aspect of the contest I had then no thought; looking to the distant hills my chief desire was to be able to see what was happening on the farther side.

CHAPTER VI

BARON STACKELBERG AT WA-FANG-HO

At this period the fight at Wa-fang-ho was the great theme of discussion at Liao-Yang, and General Stackelberg was subjected to much hostile criticism. The circumstances leading up to the battle may be recalled.

Towards the end of May the Japanese troops co-operating with Admiral Togo against Port Arthur had occupied Dalny and stormed Nanshan. Port Arthur—the Russian fleet already practically impotent—was seen to be in danger; at the Russian headquarters the danger was thought more imminent than the event proved it to be. The bulk of his army Kuropatkin kept to oppose the advance of Kuroki from the east, and though reinforcements were arriving at Liao-Yang daily it was universally acknowledged that the troops in the south were insufficient to check the Japanese advance under General Oku. The Russian Commander-in-Chief exhorted officers and men to be patient; the campaign had but begun, and the blow which was to smite the Japanese to the dust could not yet be struck. And yet Kuropatkin had sent Baron Stackelberg south in an endeavour,

foredoomed to failure, to relieve Port Arthur. That this step was taken in obedience to higher orders and against General Kuropatkin's own judgment there is no doubt. When Stackelberg got as far on the road to Port Arthur as Wa-fang-ho, he was compelled to halt in face of the Japanese force between him and his objective. And at Wa-fang-ho he was assailed and defeated by Oku's troops. The beaten troops consisted of twelve battalions of the 1st Siberian Division, twelve battalions of the 9th Siberian Division, eight battalions of the 35th Division, and two battalions of the Tobolsk Regiment. Now, at Liao-Yang, Stackelberg was being condemned by the general voice of the Russian officers, those of the headquarters staff excepted. He had been accompanied on his march by his wife, a maid-servant, and a cow, and especially bitter were the comments on the presence of these members of his establishment. Moreover, he had remained in a saloon-carriage of a special train during the greater part of the battle, and this too was a subject of reproach. The General is a German, and one of the taunts levied against him was, "No true Russian would behave as he has done."

There is, however, an explanation of the Wa-fang-ho "episode," without reflecting on Stackelberg's courage or his leadership. Having carefully studied what took place, and having heard the explanations of the chief actors in the drama, I think the reasons for the non-success at Wa-fang-ho were as follows: Although the Russian

position had been carefully prepared, the trenches were poorly made and too shallow, affording the troops manning them insufficient protection against the hot artillery fire concentrated on them. Further, the Russian artillery was new to its business, the guns were not concealed, the supply of ammunition was defective, and such strength as they had they did not know how to utilise. But there was no corresponding "rawness" on the Japanese side, and though they were not in superior force—they had two or two and a half divisions at most—they reaped the reward of their thoroughness. In the words of more than one of the vanquished "it was most galling to have been so completely defeated by an inferior race." At that time—June 1904—the Russians still felt that they were vastly superior to their enemy in the military art. It was only after Liao-Yang that a different tone became general among them.

Rightly or wrongly, historians will (probably) condemn Baron Stackelberg for the defeat at Wa-fang-ho. That he was out-generalled is undeniable; but for the criticisms affecting his personal conduct there is, I am convinced, an adequate answer.

As for making his train his headquarters, he was under necessity to keep in touch with the telegraph wires and to protect the railway line; and as to the cow, he was in bad health, and fresh milk was essential for him. The Baroness and her maidservant were certainly no encumbrance. The Baroness is a brave lady—a true daughter of Mars

—who has "followed the drum" all her life, and she was most kind and untiring in her care of the wounded. She was no more in the way than are the hospital nurses.

The position of the Russian army in the middle of June was stronger than on the days which immediately followed the defeat of General Sassulitch on the Yalu. As I learnt from excellent sources, the Russians, after that reverse, expected General Kuroki to advance without pause to Liao-Yang and Mukden, and the opinion in the Russian army was, that had he done so both places must have fallen into the hands of the Japanese at little cost to them. The reasons which stayed Kuroki at Feng-hwang-chen do not concern us here, I have merely to record that when Sassulitch was beaten very few troops were at Mukden, and that the Russian authorities there were prepared to evacuate the town hurriedly, and had made preparations accordingly. The Russo-Chinese Bank, for instance, had its gold and securities packed up ready to send to Kharbin at a minute's notice, and the Russian Commissionaire of the town had distributed all his furniture among Chinese merchants for safe keeping. Such was the feeling in Mukden, but as the Japanese did not come on, and as reinforcements from Russia did, confidence revived. Next happened the Wa-fang-ho "incident," and when I came in touch with the Field Force the Russian army was distributed somewhat in this fashion—To the east, occupying the passes, such as the Mo-tien, which led down to the Tai-

tze-ho and Liao-Yang, was Count Keller's force, ready to dispute the advance of the Japanese from Feng-hwang-chen. Rennenkampf and his Cossacks were about Si-mat-ze, and Mischenko's Cossacks were at Siu-Yen, both these forces co-operating with Count Keller. Kuropatkin at Liao-Yang held a central position; Baron Stackelberg was at Ta-shi-chao, at the northern end of the Liao-tung peninsula, with orders to check General Oku's advance from Wa-fang-ho. General Zarubaieff was posted in the rear of Stackelberg's force. He held the town of Hai-cheng, which is on the Port Arthur railway 40 miles south of Liao-Yang and 25 north of Ta-shi-chao. Between Liao-Yang and the Yen-tai coal mines to the north-east, and north to Mukden were other troops. Add to these the *Pogranitchna*, or Frontier Guard, and all the men at General Kuropatkin's disposal have been enumerated. Immediately after the battle of Wa-fang-ho their number could not have exceeded 100,000. As fresh troops arrived every day the army increased speedily, but the urgent need for more artillery, demonstrated by Stackelberg's reverse, caused guns often to take precedence of men on the railway.

The sight of the soldiers from Russia certainly raised the spirits of the headquarters' staff. They expected great things from the European troops. Staff officers with whom I talked had been apologetic in their references to the Siberians. "They cannot be compared with the regulars from Russia," said one officer; "these Siberians are a militia, that

is all." How mistaken they were in this opinion, time was to show. To-day, in the Manchurian army, the Siberian corps occupy the highest place in the estimation of all ranks. They have borne the brunt of the fighting and, without exception, have shown courage and endurance unsurpassable.

A word or two may be devoted to the Frontier Guard, already mentioned. The chief duty of this body, some 25,000 strong, was to protect the railway. They were all picked men and in receipt of good pay. They came into Manchuria as the railway was being built, and, having remained ever since, acquired a useful knowledge of the country. The force was divided into infantry, cavalry, and artillery, but the guns they had were of an old pattern. They picketed every bridge and patrolled the line, a work most efficiently performed. At the beginning of the campaign some of the mounted men were transferred to the army in the field. But the Frontier Guards were able to give little direct help to the fighting line.

CHAPTER VII

THE DEATH OF MIDDLETON

THE gardens of the great pagoda were the centre of social life at Liao-Yang. Amid its fruit trees a restaurant had been established by some Caucasians, and there in the evenings came officers off duty and newspaper men from the four corners of the world, to discuss the prospects of the war or recall "far off things and battles long ago." The music of a military band added a note of gaiety, whilst across all was the shadow of the pagoda, with curiously carved gods grinning at its portals. In this old garden one met many a man last seen in spots remote, and many a long yarn was spun in the twilight. A distinguished group in the gardens were the numerous attachés—there were representatives of England, America, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Sweden, Spain, Bulgaria, Roumania, and Chili. Some of them, including two English officers, had been with Stackelberg at Wa-fang-ho. But the most notable Europeans in Liao-Yang were two civilians, Dr. Westwater and Mr. Macnaughtan of the Medical Mission of the United Free Church of Scotland. These men lead a life of real self-sacrifice, devoting all their time to the

people amid whom they dwell. Dr. Westwater, who has been in Manchuria for more than twenty years, has witnessed many changes and encountered many perils. It is by him and men of his stamp that one would wish to have Christianity judged by the Chinese. The Celestials, however, at this time had nothing of which to complain in the conduct of the Russians. The native constables were helped by military police in maintaining order, and pilfering or unseemly behaviour of any sort was rigorously punished. If a soldier were caught robbing he might even be shot. Besides this, extensive orders for goods were placed with Chinese merchants, and the large number of coolies engaged were paid on a generous scale. Contrasting these facts with the conduct of the Russians during the Boxer troubles, the critic concludes that the change of manners was dictated by prudent desire not to irritate a people whose hostility would be a matter of moment; but the fact remains that the conduct of the Russians was exemplary, and it had its reward. Visiting one day at a house of a Chinese magistrate, who was affability itself, I was amused to see the room hung round with portraits of the Tsar. Likely enough the magistrate was prepared for contingencies, and had portraits of the Mikado hidden away for the day when the then occupants of the town would be no longer its masters.

A day or two after my arrival at Liao-Yang, General Kuropatkin, in consequence of the reverse at Wa-fang-ho, had gone down the railway in the

direction of Port Arthur as far as Ta-shi-chao, a point just north of the branch line leading to Yinkow and Nuichwang. This represented the most southerly point held by the Russians after Stackelberg's defeat. Permission to accompany the Commander-in-Chief was refused, which was annoying, as there seemed every prospect of renewed fighting. The position of a War Correspondent forcibly withheld from the front is most trying. This time of forced inaction was marked by an incident with a very sorrowful ending. One of my colleagues, Mr. Henry Middleton, had been out on the hills with the Eastern Army, and, ill with dysentery, had been taken charge of by the Red Cross Hospital of St. Eugene, at Lan-jan-san. Mr. Douglas Story, who had accompanied Middleton and had also been ill, had recovered and was at Liao-Yang, where we met. Story was anxious to return to his comrade, and I accompanied him. Just outside the east gate of the town we were met by Middleton's Chinese servant, Sin-Fu, who brought a note from Middleton asking Story to come at once to settle his affairs, as he was very ill. Rendered anxious by a message of such grave import, we pressed on at our utmost speed. The condition of the road was awful. It had rained heavily for several days, and our ponies slithered in the mud at every step. In the quagmires to which the roads are reduced after rain the horses struggle along knee deep in slush; it is impossible to discover the specially bad spots, and suddenly you find yourself almost engulfed in the thick black

mire. Riding thus on this occasion I thought of a story told me by one of the foreign attachés, that near Wa-fang-ho he had seen a cavalry man drowned in a hole in the middle of the road! But such thoughts did not cause us to slacken rein, and after riding about 10 versts (6 miles) we reached the hills and a better road.

We had entered a beautiful country, the hills were patched with fir trees and crowned with picturesque temples; down their sides rushed brawling brooks crystal clear; fields of white and red poppies and stretches of long waving grass were seen in the side valleys, which were dotted with pretty villages. Now and again we passed a convoy of provisions winding its way painfully through the mud, or a small body of Cossacks going to or from the Eastern Army, at whom the peasants, minding their flocks on the hillside, would gaze curiously.

At length we halted for luncheon, and here my pony, exhibiting base ingratitude, for he had been well fed, rolled over and smashed my camera. It was an unlucky accident, and deprived me of the opportunity of taking many photographs.

Having crossed a steep and rugged "nek," from which was obtained an excellent view of the country below, we arrived at Sui-lin-tze as daylight faded, and here we decided to spend the night. We had finished our meal at the *phanza* (inn) and were sitting quietly smoking before seeking the *kang* of the rest-house. But we got no rest, for out of the darkness rode in an Army-surgeon from Lan-jan-san,

and saluting us, addressed himself to Story, whom he knew, saying, *Pardon, M'sieu, mais votre ami—il est mort!*

Dead! And our errand bootless! The news seemed incredible; it was not what we had expected. The young life gone, and with none but strangers near? There must be some mistake; it might not yet be too late, and we must on to see. Quickly we saddled our horses and cantered on through the darkness, stumbling over stones, crossing the Tai-tze-ho swollen high by the rain, careful for nothing save to assure ourselves of the truth. Lan-jan-san reached, we went at once to the hospital, and were taken to the bedside of our colleague. The truth *had* been told us—Middleton lay dead. For the most exacting of masters, the newspaper reader, he had risked, and lost, his life.

It was with emotions deeply stirred that we left the hospital to seek a shelter for the few hours which had yet to pass ere the new day called us to new duties. On the morrow they buried our dead, with all the impressive ritual of the Orthodox Church and with every token of respect and sympathy. Too much praise cannot be given to these ministers of humanity; to Count Apraxin, the Director of the Hospital, to the surgeons and to the nurses. In driving rain and through the mud and slush all followed the coffin of the young Englishman to the grave. No pompous funeral rites would have been half so impressive.

That day, at Lan-jan-san, came in from the front an infantry regiment, part of Count Keller's army,

which had been forced back from the Mo-tein-ling[1] and other passes in the eastern hills by General Kuroki. The rain persisted, the roads were as bad as they could be; wearily and silently the men trudged in, drenched to the skin. They pitched camp and began to get fires lit—no easy matter, considering the state of the ground. In this connection I witnessed an incident at once amusing and instructive. Fuel was scarce, and some five or six soldiers came to the yard of the house in which I was sitting out of the rain, and seized hold of a few faggots. They did not take them away, for out of the house flew the owner, and with indignant objurgations insisted that they should restore to him his property. The men, though hungry, tired, and wet through, dropped the sticks at once and went quietly away,—six big, strong soldiers, absolutely routed by one old Chinaman. I do not think that any other European soldiers in the same circumstances would have given way. It was a striking object-lesson of the wonderfully good behaviour of the Russians, at that period, to the Chinese. The Russian soldier is both kind-hearted and sympathetic, and gentle to a degree, except in the heat of battle or when under the influence of alcohol.

The regiment mentioned was followed later in the day by a large convoy of wounded, who had been bumped and jolted in springless Chinese carts all the way from Keller's main force. Nor could our good friends at the hospital of St. Eugene do more than take in the worst cases; the hospital,

[1] Ling is Chinese for pass.

which had looked after the wounded in the Yalu fight, was already crowded. So the majority of the wounded had to be carried on in the same primitive conveyances to Sui-lin-tze. For ourselves, Count Apraxin gave us beds in his own room. The next morning I was introduced to General Kashtalinsky, the commander of the 12th Siberian Rifles in the battle of the Yalu, in which he fought with conspicuous gallantry, and was badly wounded. Having at the request of Count Apraxin drawn up a notice in English, asking the Japanese to respect the hospital property and staff should Lan-jan-san fall into their hands, we took our leave of the friends who had been so kind to our dead comrade, and with many expressions of gratitude prepared for the road.

For the first few miles we accompanied Count Keller, who had arrived in the night with his main force, and was taking up, about three versts in the rear of Lan-jan-san, a position which had already been prepared for defence, and which commanded the road to Liao-Yang. Roads had been cleverly constructed up the sides of the steep hills, and the artillery was got into position despite the great difficulties of transport. Having seen Keller into his new quarters, we rode back to Liao-Yang.

CHAPTER VIII

RUSSIAN HOSPITALITY—AND OTHER MATTERS

To remain idle at Liao-Yang seemed intolerable, and, on the last day of June, Story and I again set off on the eastern road, hoping to see the fighting believed to be imminent in the Lan-jan-san position. As in the former expedition, we went without permission of the Press Censor. On the road we passed reinforcements on the way to Count Keller, and our spirits rose at the prospect of battle. Soon after the hills were reached we stopped for luncheon at a store kept by a Greek. On entering we were surprised and disappointed to see a number of Russian officers there already lunching—for our object was to push on, and we feared the over-kind attentions of our friends. Seeing the red brassards on our arms—the badge of a war correspondent—the officers rose, and having inquired our nationality asked us to sit down with them. Reluctantly we took our seats at the only table in the room. The Russian officer is the most hospitable of men; unfortunately his hospitality sometimes goes a little too far. On this occasion, after drinking a glass or two of vodke, the Russian national drink, taken with a *Sakuskha* (hors d'œuvre), our hosts insisted

on ordering all the bottles in the store with "London" printed on the labels. In vain we protested. Malaga, Madeira, sherry, outrageous port, gin, and bad brandy—liquors that probably never knew the lands of their supposed origin—were produced in turn, and we had to make the best of it. There are no "heel-taps" among Russians. "*Vashe zdurovia*" (Your health) is the toast, and the glass must be emptied to the last drop. As one vile compound after another appeared, each with the hateful London label (though as likely as not neither bottle nor label was from England), all my desires for the growth of British trade abroad vanished. It seemed that the drinking would never be done. But catching sight of a bottle of Scotch whisky, Story and I decided to make use of an heroic remedy—a veritable "Long Tom" to oppose to field artillery. Saying that whisky was my companion's national drink, I poured out the best part of a tumbler, neat, for each man, and called a toast. Loyally the Russians drank it—and that day they troubled us no more.

After a bad night I woke early next morning, solemnly swearing henceforth to adopt the "blue ribbon." None of the Russian officers were awake. Story and I saddled our horses and rode away—he for Sui-lin-tze, I back to Liao-Yang. For the time being I had decided not to try and dodge the Censor, especially as I had learned that immediate fighting was highly unlikely.

It was late evening when the gates of Liao-Yang were reached, and then, stupidly, I had

forgotten the password, and could not answer the sentry's challenge. He seemed unpleasantly suspicious, and advanced so as to conveniently cover me with his rifle. To be shot was the last thing I wished, and I racked my brain for the word, one out of my limited Russian vocabulary. A happy memory of dinners and theatre parties at home solved my difficulty; to the mind's eye rose the vision of the Savoy Hotel as seen from the Embankment. At once I shouted out "*Savoi* (Russian for friend) *Karrasho Voienni Korrespondent.*" This bad Russian somewhat appeased the sentry, and he allowed me to come up and show him my papers. Like most of his comrades he could not read, and so he called the sergeant of the guard. Happily the sergeant could read, and I was allowed to enter the town.

As the situation of the armies remained practically unchanged, I decided to take a short "holiday" and go to Mukden, making the journey with another correspondent. On this occasion we dispensed with the formality of buying a ticket—it saved both time and money. The bother of getting a ticket during the Russian occupation was immense, and often took hours, whereas if you hav'nt a ticket you simply get into the train without any formality. The process is simplicity itself. The wisdom of our action, or inaction, was justified by the event; we travelled safely, and were not asked for tickets. Walking through the fields back to the Derlungdien Inn, one could not help marvelling at the rapid growth of the *kowliang*

(millet). A few weeks ago it was just sprouting, and now it was fully four feet high. It affords striking evidence of the fertility of the soil. This millet is perhaps the most characteristic of Manchurian plants, and it serves so many purposes that one is inclined to call it the William Whiteley of the vegetable world. It yields at once food, fuel, and shelter; the grain makes a nutritious dish somewhat resembling oatmeal, and the stalk, when fodder is scarce, can be eaten by horses. However, the better use of the stalk, which looks something like a small bamboo, is for making matting, fences, and thatching. From the military point of view the *kowliang* has advantages and disadvantages. Standing, when full grown, fully ten feet high it forms a most effective screen, but is as troublesome to one side as the other.

Whilst on this flying visit to Mukden I again visited Colonel Pestich and enlisted his sympathy for the war correspondents in their trying position. He insisted on my seeing General Planson, Admiral Alexeieff's chief diplomatic adviser, who promised to do his best to get the correspondents permission to accompany the troops actually in the field. With such assurances we had to be content, and we started back for Liao-Yang. The journey was delayed owing to the congestion of the traffic, and whilst we were crossing the Tai-tze-ho I saw a sight which set me thinking—one of the pontoon bridges placed across the river by the engineers had been swept away. It appeared that all the bridges originally built by the engineers were too

short. They had been put in position when the water was low, and no allowance made for the rise of the level after the spring rains. Consequently, with the Tai-tze-ho in flood, the water surged between the pontoons and the river banks,—an awkward situation if the army had been suddenly forced to retreat.

Returned to Liaô-Yang I went straight to Baron Venigen, who told me that the war correspondents would be allowed to go to the front, each being attached to a particular corps. This was something, but the permission was limited to seeing the operations in the east. Kuropatkin, said I to myself, expects trouble in the south. Before, however, I had completed arrangements to join Count Keller's force, the authorities changed their minds, and leave was given the correspondents to go south, where General Kuropatkin had for some days been with Baron Stackelberg's force.

CHAPTER IX

IN TOUCH WITH THE ENEMY—THE FATE OF SPIES

IT was with spirits exhilarated that I found myself, on July the 16th, at Ta-shi-chao, officially attached to General Samsonoff's Cavalry division, and in touch with the enemy. Mr. Baring and I with all our belongings had left Liao-Yang the previous day. The run south had many points of interest, and beyond Hai-cheng to the east of the railway were large encampments of the 2nd Siberian Army Corps, under General Sassulitch, who guarded the Russian left flank and occupied the tops of the hills nearest the railway. Somewhere in the same direction were General Mischenko and his Cossacks, who had been moved from the eastern hills. At Ta-shi-chao, which stands at the head of the Gulf of Liao-tung on its eastern side, the hills come close up to the railway line. Ta-shi-chao, as already indicated, owes its importance to the fact that from it a railway branches off to Nuichwang, which was then still held by the Russians. From a rocky hill which towers above the railway station is a lookout post, whence one can scan the surrounding country and view the sea—the goal of Russia in her long march across Asia. What we

saw was curious and somewhat perplexing; a whole fleet of junks beating up towards Yinkow.

All was animation at Ta-shi-chao, inspired by the nearness of the foe and the presence in camp of General Kuropatkin. The Commander-in-Chief lived as usual in a railway train—drawn up in a siding—and near it was the improvised mess-room of the headquarters' staff. All round the town were camped the soldiers—with transport and infantry lines, artillery parks and picketed horses, and here and there a hospital. Most armies in the field look alike, and I could not help comparing Ta-shi-chao to Bloemfontein in 1900, just before Lord Roberts began his advance on Pretoria. The Russian soldiers, in their shirts of brown-holland and black trousers, sitting smoking or listening to some comrade playing the inevitable concertina, were not very unlike our khaki-dressed men. There was little opportunity for social life; here none but workers were wanted, and the only public rendezvous was the little buffet at the railway station, that gained for itself great notoriety on account of the plague of flies which infested it. The weather was bright and warm, following heavy rains; climatic conditions which doubtless suited the flies. One wished that it had been otherwise, for ceiling and whitewashed walls of the buffet were completely covered by the millions, as it seemed, of black crawling house-flies. They settled in swarms on one's food. I shudder to think how many found in me a living tomb!

Nor were the flies at the railway station only.

Mr. Baring and I with two French correspondents had taken up quarters in the Roman Catholic Mission Church, and at nights lay round the altar, but even here the flies pursued us. One sighed for a mosquito net! In desperation we hired two small boys, who tried their best to drive away our tormentors with whisks. In one direction we found consolation. At Liao-Yang Baring and I had engaged two Montenegrins as servants, and mine, Giorgi, proved an excellent cook. The way in which he could dress a chicken was little short of miraculous.

The life at Ta-shi-chao was varied and interesting. The Russian outposts were 15 to 20 versts from the town, and one could visit nearly all of them in a day. Beyond our outposts were those of the enemy, who held the crest of the hills stretching south and east of the Russian position. Of them we saw scarcely anything. Our artillery, *i.e.* the Russian, fired daily at the Japanese posts, but with what effect it is hard to say, probably very little, for the enemy scarcely deigned to reply. The booming of the guns certainly did not disturb the Chinese farmers, who continued working in the fields between the two armies quite unconcernedly. They took the whistling of the big shells overhead as a matter of course, a thing they had been accustomed to all their lives. The inactivity of the enemy greatly puzzled the Russians, who sent out reconnoitring parties nightly to try and find out what the Japanese were doing. In this they never succeeded, for the Japanese proved

ever alert, and stopped these parties with superior forces. The Intelligence Department of Kuropatkin's army was completely at fault; we knew no more about the movements of the enemy's main body than we knew of what was happening at the South Pole. Lack of news was made up for by most plentiful rumours. Some averred that the greater part of the Japanese had gone away to assault Port Arthur; others that hundreds of the foe died daily from dysentery—a report spread by the doctors of certain Cossack regiments who had visited old Japanese camping-grounds. If the Russians were unable to penetrate the mystery of the Japanese movements, they, on the other hand, knew all they wanted to know concerning those of their opponents. A large number of spies—Chinese, or Japanese disguised—must have been in the lines at Ta-shi-chao. One of these spies was captured and shot. He was a staff officer dressed as a Chinaman, with regulation pigtail, and would have escaped detection had he not, in the presence of a Cossack, drawn a book from his pocket and began making notes. Such action on the part of a supposed coolie led to his immediate arrest and detection. He was, or seemed to be, absolutely indifferent to his fate. With the imperturbable smile of his race, he said simply, "It is the fortune of war." During the campaign several other Japanese staff officers were taken as spies, and each met his fate in the same calm spirit, extorting the admiration of their captors, who loathed the hateful necessity of summary execution.

On one occasion, however, a detected "spy" was not shot. Among the Transbaikalian Cossacks were many Buriats—Mongolians and Buddhists; they looked, to European eyes at least, exactly like the Japanese, and they were of much the same stature. The Buriat is very useful in Manchuria, as he is generally on good terms with his Chinese co-religionists. The "spy" who was not shot was a Buriat officer who was mistaken for a Japanese, and only escaped death through the timely appearance of a friend.

A never-failing topic of conversation—one that always filled up gaps when the fate of a spy or the failure of a reconnoitring party had been talked threadbare—was "the rains." We had had a good deal of rain already, but when one said "the rains" it was known at once that something very unpleasant was meant. In "the rains," some said, it would be impossible to continue fighting, as the roads would be impassable; another and entirely contradictory opinion was that the Japanese were only waiting for "the rains" to make an advance, when they by some unexplained means would move easily across the flooded country, whilst the Russian transport would stick helplessly in the mud. From what I had seen of Manchurian roads I was prepared to accept the most pessimistic opinion. However, "the rains," in the sense indicated, were a delusion. That the Japanese were a more mobile force was evident enough. They had splendidly organised coolie transport—which the Russians lacked; they had mountain guns, and knew how

to use them—the Russians had then heavy field artillery only, and later, when they got mountain guns, did not know how to use them; the Japanese kept to the hills, where, to borrow a phrase from the turf, the going was good; the Russians were chiefly in the plains, where their heavy transport floundered along roads where the going was decidedly heavy.

Though headquarters had manifested a certain jealousy at the presence of correspondents, the regimental officers at the front welcomed us and were glad to see us at the outposts, and on such occasions would fire an extra round or two at the enemy in order to show the foreigners the capacity of their guns; or talk over the news from the east or from Port Arthur. From the east we heard of a fight in which General Rennenkampf was wounded in the leg. This officer was probably the finest of the Cossack leaders, a man of the utmost daring and courage, who, having served in Manchuria during the Boxer troubles, was well acquainted with the country. He was not, however, a great tactician, and lacked some of those intellectual qualities which mark the great soldier. His popularity with his men was unbounded.

From Port Arthur we got news fairly frequently —thus on July 18th we heard that their fortifications had been completed. Officers from the besieged garrison usually left the port by junk and got away either to Chifu or to Nuichwang. They ran a double danger, that of being captured by the Japanese, or of being killed by the pirates who

infested the Yellow Sea, and particularly the Gulf of Liao-tung. These officers' reports were all made to Alexeieff as well as to Kuropatkin, and it was common gossip that the Viceroy insisted, from his quarters at Mukden, on dictating orders to General Stössel as to how the defence of Port Arthur was to be conducted.

I have already said that we were unable to obtain any trustworthy information as to the movements of the Japanese, but the belief in camp was that the enemy were holding the Russians at Ta-shi-chao with a skeleton force merely, and that Marshal Oyama, who was now personally directing the Japanese forces, was concentrating his troops for an attack on Kuropatkin's left flank. Whether or not this was the case the days were dull enough at Ta-shi-chao, and I was planning to visit Nui-chwang and taste for a brief period the sweets of civilisation, when (on July 22nd) General Kuropatkin suddenly left for Liao-Yang. I saw his train steam out of the station, and, concluding that urgent news from Count Keller was taking him to the east, I decided to follow in his wake. Leaving horse and kit behind I went hurrying back to the north.

CHAPTER X

A CHINESE WELCOME AT ANPING

THE news which had reached Liao-Yang as to the situation of the eastern army at once explained General Kuropatkin's hurried departure from Ta-shi-chao. Count Keller, from his position at Lan-jan-san, had made ineffectual attempts to recapture the Mo-tien-ling, and in several engagements had been driven back by General Kuroki, who, it was feared, would now descend the valley of the Tai-tze-ho towards Liao-Yang. To check this advance without withdrawing any of the troops from the south was General Kuropatkin's immediate object. Fortunately he was able to utilise the first troops from European Russia to arrive in Manchuria, namely, the 10th and 17th Army Corps, which, immediately on reaching Liao-Yang, were sent to Anping, a town 20 miles in a direct line to the south-east. To Anping General Kuropatkin and the whole of his Staff had also gone; Keller, with the 3rd Siberian Army Corps, was on Kuropatkin's right near Lan-jan-san. I borrowed a horse from a friend, and, accompanied by an American colleague, was soon on the road to Anping, which we drew near towards evening. Anping is a fair-sized

village situated in a fertile valley watered by a tributary of the Tai-tze-ho and surrounded by hills. I did not enter the village, but, with my companion, camped in a picturesque little temple not far from the main road, yet hidden from the eyes of the curious by kindly trees. My reason for avoiding observation was the fear of being sent back to Liao-Yang, should I be discovered by any of the staff officers. The war correspondents, it may be explained, having once chosen the Army Corps to which they desired to be attached were not at liberty to leave it, as I had done. From our temple retreat we were near enough to be able to reach quickly any part of the field, should fighting be toward—and though as anxious as the majority of people for "goodwill among men," just then I was keenly desirous of seeing a battle. For what else had I come hither? In the cool of the evening I walked through the tall *kowliang* and across fields of cotton and fragrant balm to the river's brim. The scene was one that would delight the eye of the artist,—the calmly flowing stream, the peaceful valley, and the flicker of many fires from the large camp pitched on the hills beyond. As I watched the Cossacks come down to water their horses, I thought of the morrow and longed for the joy of battle. When I got back to our temple home it was to find that we were already in favour with the villagers, who brought us forage for our horses and some newly caught carp for ourselves. This kindness was due to our nationality; *Ingwa* (English) and *Megwa* (American) were words which

acted like talismans. Heavy rain during the night caused the river to rise, and in the morning, from the temple where we lay *perdu*, we witnessed the difficulty with which the Cossacks crossed the swollen stream. The next day we found that General Kuropatkin had shifted some 10 versts, and we ventured to locate headquarters. The longed-for battle did not appear imminent, and not wishing to run unnecessary risks of detection we turned to ride back to our hiding-place. Detected, however, we were, for suddenly along the road clattered a group of staff officers with none other than Baron Venigen, the press censor at Liao-Yang, at their head. Our red brassards showed conspicuously and there was no escape, so taking our courage in both hands we rode up and saluted. Baron Venigen was surprised to see me. "I thought you were at Ta-shi-chao with Samsonoff; you ought not to be here," said he. I made such excuses as I could, pleading my desire to see the coming fight. The Baron was kindly disposed, and could make allowance for the ardour of youth. A diplomatic blindness obscured his vision. With a laugh and a merry twinkle he rode on, saying, "I haven't seen you, but—keep as far from headquarters as you can." Delighted to have come so successfully through the meeting we bade farewell to our temple refuge, and going to the outskirts of the camp obtained a new domicile in the house of a rich Chinese merchant who lived in a neighbouring village. Our host, and all the villagers, showed us much kindness, and again we found our nation-

ality known and respected. These apparently simple folk did not need to be told what countrymen we were—they as unerringly identified my friend as an American as they dubbed me *Ingwa*. How they knew I cannot imagine, for our kits and clothes were alike and we both had American saddles. There was great excitement in the village that evening when a balloon section marched through. The balloon was floating just above the tree-tops, being kept in that position by the men who held the leading ropes with which it was furnished. The Chinese gazed wonder-struck at this new device of the "foreign devil." I noticed with curiosity that suspended from the balloon was a flag which looked uncommonly like the British white ensign with an anchor in one corner. The villagers noticed the flag, too, pointed to the balloon and then to me, saying, *Ingwa*, and by their signs seemed to assume that it was my balloon and that I travelled in it, on which assumption I became a hero in their eyes. Possibly the Chinese inscription on our brassards helped in forming their opinion; that inscription is *Woofangse*, literally translated, "War look see man," or spy—the nearest approach to war correspondent the Chinese language admits. The merchant in whose house we stayed brought us *kowliang*, baked in sugar, forming an excellent sweetmeat, and served tea after the Chinese fashion. The tea leaves (green) are placed in a shallow cup or saucer, the water poured over them and a second saucer placed over the first. You take them up with both hands, and

slightly pushing back the top saucer, drink down the tea, which is deliciously refreshing. Kind as was our host, who thought our presence a safeguard against marauding Cossacks, we found our quarters not altogether agreeable. Part of his merchandise consisted of dried and drying hides, which, to speak plainly, stank, while he also possessed several large jars full of the dye used in dyeing clothes butcher's blue, the universal colour of the dress of Chinese country folk. These drawbacks notwithstanding, we found it pleasant to be with these honest people, with whom we lodged for some days. The peaceful evenings passed with them made more piquant the stir of battle by day, for this alternation was now to take place.

CHAPTER XI

THE FIGHT FOR SUNGAR HILL

THE country in which Kuropatkin's force was encamped was very hilly—not mountainous, but yet difficult for the employment of large numbers of horsemen. Leaving our host—and the odour of the tannery and the dyeing vats—at daybreak, we made for the line of outposts, which occupied a ridge of hills overlooking the valley of the Tai-tze-ho. Up one of these hills, held by a small post, we climbed, and sat down by the officer in command. To our left ran the river, winding through the valley, a gleam of silver in the sunlight; to our right, a rocky pass and hills rising abruptly. Across the river were other hills—and those were in possession of the enemy. The distance between the opposing outposts was in some places not more than 700 yards. In the narrow valley the *kowliang* was growing, high and green, and villages nestled here and there amid leafy groves. Save for the Russian outposts and the infantry bivouacking behind the hills, there was no suggestion of conflict, except that indicated by the little stone "sungar" on a hill opposite that on which we were. The day was perfect; beautiful, swallow-tailed

butterflies sailed over our heads, and the air hummed with insect life. The brawling of the Tai-tze-ho, as it hurried over its stony bed like a Scotch salmon stream, invited one to sleep. With my telescope I scanned the valley, the villages, the hills again and again; but there was no sign of the Japanese. Only some hawks hovered overhead, while in a farm, just below, the Chinese were going unconcernedly about their daily work. And so we waited. The officer to whom we had attached ourselves spoke a little French, and told us that the Japanese were holding, besides the farther range of hills, the villages in the valley beneath us. Pointing to the sungar opposite, he warned us not to stand up. This sungar thus became a magnetic point. Suddenly over its top something moved. The something slowly materialised into a head, followed by a khaki-clad pair of shoulders. At last I had seen a real live "Jap." There he sat gazing at us. Not that it was absolutely the first Japanese I had seen, for at Ta-shi-chao dim little black figures could be discerned in the distance; but they had been too far off to excite great interest. But now the foe, typified in this one man, was but 700 yards away. Presently a soldier crawled up to the officer. "May I have a shot?" said he. The officer paused; then, looking at us, nodded assent. The soldier took aim, and in a moment the ping of a bullet broke the stillness of the valley. And the "Jap"? He sat on undisturbed, nor could we tell where the bullet had struck. Again and again the soldier repeated his

shot, but his marksmanship was at fault, for his fire had no effect, save that the shoulders of the Jap disappeared and we could only see his eyes and cap above the sungar. The officer turned to me with an invitation to have a shot. "Perhaps you might do better," said he. As a mere matter of hitting the mark, I should have liked to have taken my chance; but, apart from a liking for the Japanese, I was a non-combatant, and I refused the invitation. And from the sungar came no reply to our few shots; the Japanese disdained to answer. So the day wore on, both sides, as it seemed, anxious only to enjoy the balmy air, the bright sunshine. To fight was too much "fag."

We sat on the hillside, lazily disappointed. Before the day closed, there was a flicker of excitement. As the afternoon sun was slanting to the horizon, a group of staff officers at the head of a troop of Transbaikalian Cossacks crossed the river and trotted up the valley. Would the Japanese disclose their position? Yes, for from the trees encircling a village came the pip-pop of a rifle being fired. The Cossacks stopped a moment, and then went slowly on again till there came a chorus of "pip-pops." Then the Russians turned, trotting first, but breaking into a gallop as the bullets whistled more thickly around them, flicking from the ground little puffs of dust. As the Cossacks came up the rocky pass to our right, they were obliged to dismount, the bullets still following them and humming over our heads, which made us fire a volley or two at the sungar by way of

retaliation. Then, as the Cossacks got out of sight, quiet fell once more on the valley. The officers who had been out climbed up to see us; none had been hit. They had been to "look see," and, having seen, rode off to report their news to the general. My companion and I also rode off, back to our sleeping quarters. On the way, we passed the Daghestan Regiment of Cossacks, which had come from Liao-Yang. Their appearance was more picturesque than business-like. Fierce-looking men they seemed, dressed in a long, flowing cloth coat, drawn in at the waist. They had rifles, in a curious cloth cover, slung on their backs; carried curved swords with embossed silver handles, had knives stuck in their belts, and on their heads sheep-skin caps. They were magnificently mounted on horses not unlike English thoroughbreds, sitting high up on regular Cossack saddles, and riding very short, with their knees tucked up. Their standard was proudly displayed, and at their head was a man who played a long flute with a trumpet-like end, drawing from it sounds resembling those of a bagpipe. This *débonnaire* regiment was a volunteer force, and in its ranks were many members of the aristocracy.

The next day saw us again at the same hill, fearing a repetition of the inaction of yesterday. Events were, however, ordered otherwise. Several battalions had been brought up, and we learned that an attempt on "Sungar Hill" was to be made. (This hill, we ascertained, the Japanese used as a signal station, and from it they could see the

Russian forces quite plainly.) The battalions crossed the river, deployed, and began to mount the hill, taking advantage of the cover afforded by depressions in the ground and the bushes which grew thickly up the slopes. From where I sat they could be seen perfectly through the glasses. They were met by a fire which grew hotter and hotter as they advanced, and they stopped occasionally to pour a volley into their opponents, their bayonets glistening in the bright sunshine. I could not help being deeply struck by one thing, and that was the uniform worn by the officers. Each was arrayed in a spotlessly white tunic with gold epaulettes and gold sword belts, thus affording the Japanese riflemen a magnificent target. They led their men up the hill, sword in hand. The Russians for a while were lost to sight among the trees near the hilltop. Then, coming into the open again, they swept over the crest of the hill, the Japanese giving way before the onslaught. The hill was ours (if I may, for the time, identify myself with the Russian army), but it had not been won without loss. A good many poor fellows lay dead, and more were taken to the "flying" hospital in the valley below. The method adopted for removing the wounded was quick and practical, and worthy the attention of our own army. Red Cross orderlies with flags accompanied the troops during their advance, and signalled back to the hospital the position of the wounded men, and, as soon as the hill was taken, the hospital staff came up and collected the wounded without delay.

There was no pursuit of the retreating foe, and little firing after the hill was captured. The fight had been entirely with rifles, no artillery being engaged on either side. Having taken the position whence the Japanese had been spying upon them, the Russians set about to fortify the hills, previously occupied by outposts only. Three batteries were brought up to the hill on which I was stationed, and places for the guns dug just below the crest, the newly dug earth and the guns being afterwards covered by branches of trees. The limbers also were carefully concealed. Batteries were placed on the hills to the right and left, and strong infantry supports supplied. Undoubtedly the position of the Russians had been strengthened, though in itself the capture of "Sungar Hill" was a comparatively small affair. I had watched with surprise the Russian officers go into battle with conspicuous uniforms; now, through the telescope, I saw the difference in Japanese methods. At the far end of the valley I could make out a column of the enemy on the march. The men were dressed in khaki, and were difficult to distinguish —whereas the Russian soldiers, as well as the officers, wore an easily seen uniform, and as often as not disported themselves on the skyline.

In order to ascertain the strength of the Japanese position, two companies of infantry were sent that afternoon down into the valley. Worming their way through the *kowliang*, they entered two villages, but were then subjected to a hot rifle

fire from the hidden enemy. We watched the men taking shelter behind the walls of the houses, but they were soon forced to abandon the villages and run back to their own lines. It was clear enough that the Japanese were still in force, and on the next day, from the same observatory point, I witnessed a characteristic attempt by some 400 Daghestan and Transbaikalian Cossacks to find out what General Kuroki was doing at the farther end of the valley. Off went the Cossacks at a trot, with flag flying at their head. On reaching the *kowliang* near the line of villages held by the enemy, they were met by a heavy fire which caused them to stop. There they halted, sitting on their horses and gazing round for the invisible foe, during which time several of them were hit. Then they turned and came helter-skelter back. Their commander collected his scattered forces and, after resting them a little while, advanced again, but with the same result. As a looker-on, I do not think that there was more than a company or a company and a half of Japanese opposing the Russians, and there was no reason why the Cossacks should not have penetrated the screen. But to do so they should have dismounted and used their rifles. This it never occurred to them to do. All through the campaign, in fact, too much confidence was placed by the cavalry in sword and lance, the men never being properly trained to fight with their rifles on foot. The lessons taught by the Mounted Infantry in South Africa were all thrown away on them.

For three days I had watched the operations, but the prospects of a big battle still seemed remote, whereas news came to the camp of renewed Japanese activity in the south. That the Commander-in-Chief thought the situation on that side the more serious was evidenced by his returning to Ta-shi-chao, and once again I determined to follow his fortunes. So back to Anping and Liao-Yang. On leaving the hill the Daghestan contingent was again passed. The men were still as smartly dressed, but they had lost some of the bravado displayed the day before. Perhaps it was, that among the wounded being carried along on stretchers were some of their own comrades; possibly the wound which their vanity had received was still harder to bear. As we passed by the main camp the sound of many voices, rhythmical, magnificent, smote our ears. Thirty thousand of the Russian soldiers were singing the Lord's Prayer. It was a thing to be remembered. The Russians have fine voices, and there is something, too, in the language which lends itself to song.

That night we rested in the temple which had previously served as our hiding-place, and in the morning rode quickly into Liao-Yang, passing *en route* several battalions bound for Anping. At the Russo-Chinese Bank at Liao-Yang I heard stirring news of fighting then proceeding at Ta-shi-chao, and at my quarters found my Montenegrin servant Giorgi and my horse. Giorgi told me that the Russians had been driven back and that he had hardly time to get away. So without delay I made

for the station, and there met Colonel Potapoff. Together we set out south, but not to Ta-shi-chao; that was already in the hands of the enemy, and we could go no farther than Hai-Cheng, reached early the next day.

CHAPTER XII

HAI-CHENG EVACUATED BY THE RUSSIANS

As we detrained at Hai-Cheng the boom of many guns rang in our ears, and we learned that a rear-guard action was being fought.

Hai-Cheng itself is a small town, but it boasts a big stone wall, and the Russians held a fortified position here. It was, however, hardly tenable at this time (Aug. 2), as on the east it was commanded by high hills, and on the west was a plain which rendered it easy for the Japanese to turn the Russian right. It appeared that a few days previously (on July 25th), General Oku had unexpectedly attacked the Russians at Ta-shi-chao and driven them out of their positions. As at Wa-fang-ho, artillery had played an important part in the fight. The Russians on this occasion were commanded by General Zarubaieff of the 4th Siberian Army Corps, and under him Baron Stackelberg had the 1st Siberian Army Corps. The Japanese artillery fire was very heavy, and before it the 4th Siberian Army Corps had to retire, as well as the 1st Siberian Army Corps, which, posted on the extreme right, did not bear the full brunt of the battle. At the same time the

Japanese had swept down on General Sassulitch, driving him from his post of Simucheng in the hills to the east, and hotly engaged General Mischenko, whose cavalry lost heavily. Stackelberg had been forced to retreat, and was now at Hai-Cheng with the Japanese at his heels. All this I learned from Mr. Baring, who had been at the Ta-shi-chao battle. With Mr. Baring I now rode on, past the train from which Kuropatkin was directing the operations, to a convenient hill whence we could watch the fight. The day was hot—hotter indeed than the hottest day I ever experienced in South Africa—and the troops were utterly exhausted. They were holding the enemy at bay—mainly by artillery fire—whilst along the road to Hai-Cheng transport blocked the way. Some of the men had been in the firing line sixteen hours, and the strain, together with the hot weather, told on them heavily. Their condition was unnecessarily aggravated by the cumbersomeness of the uniform and kit the Russian infantryman is compelled to bear. His kit is too heavy, especially in view of the large amount of ammunition it is essential to carry, his high boots are not suitable for long marches in hot weather, and his small forage cap gives no protection against the sun. Needless to say, there were many cases of sunstroke. It seemed to me also that the Russian soldiers were not able to endure long fatigue, or great heat, as well as our own men in South Africa.

The rear-guard were fighting a very pretty action, and there seemed no immediate prospect of

the Japanese turning us out of Hai-Cheng. Going back to the town, we saw many a sad sight—wounded men dragging themselves along the dusty road; others, more sorely hit, carried on stretchers or on a large strip of canvas tenting fixed on two rifles. At the railway station were hospital trains in waiting, and down on the platform were placed the blood-stained stretchers. Then the poor shattered fellows were taken in charge by the nurses—devoted women, whom to praise sufficiently seems impossible? It was with the greatest admiration I watched them at work. With one arm they would support some badly hit soldier, and in the other carry his rifle and heavy kit. They did not seem to feel fatigue or weakness, but quietly and methodically worked on all the day, amid the hurry and bustle incident to the preparations for retreat. The confusion in the town was great, and most men's nerves that day were "jumpy"; at any time the Japanese might come through the hills east of the railway and cut the Russian line. The clerks at the telegraph office were distraught, and though I handed in a press message that had passed the censor, I could not get it forwarded. To incidents like these the war correspondent is liable, especially when with an army in retreat. Why, after all, should the correspondent be favoured? Of what moment is it to the hurried telegraphist—or the General in command—that people at the other end of the world should discuss their misfortunes over the breakfast egg?

That evening I spent with an American correspondent in a village near by, in which several infantry battalions were bivouacking. The heavy transport of the army had been going back all the afternoon to An-shan-chan, and now the rattle of wheels continued in the darkness. The night was too warm to rest on the *kang*, so wrapping ourselves in our blankets we went to sleep in the yard. But we were not destined to enjoy peaceful slumber. I had hardly closed my eyes when I was aroused by a terrible din, caused by men galloping past and carts being driven rapidly, mingled with hoarse yells and shouts, among which I thought I could distinguish the word "Japonetzt." My American friend—a Pole by birth—dashed into the street, coming back quickly with the report that the Japanese had surprised the camp and were sweeping through it with fixed bayonets! Mounting our horses we prepared for eventualities—we certainly did not wish to be spitted in mistake by a fiery Jap. The street presented a scene of extraordinary uproar. Transport drivers were wildly urging on their horses; foot-soldiers were running by at top speed. We stopped some of the fugitives, but they answered our questions confusedly, and we could not make out the true cause of the panic. Whilst gazing on the scene and wondering why there was no sound of shooting, I was made to understand the danger of impeding a great current by being nearly knocked over by a cart rattling by. We sent Mr. Baring's Montenegrin to try and find out the reason for the

panic, but he failed to return, and, deciding to go with the crowd, we turned our horses' heads towards An-shan-chan. We stopped, however, after going a few versts, at a spot where a party of Cossacks were camping by the banks of a stream. As they kept a guard we felt that we should receive warning if the enemy in reality came down upon us. They didn't, and we tried to resume our interrupted slumbers. I lay on some sand by the banks of the stream. Now, sand does not make a luxurious bed, it "packs" or shifts about under you, invariably making nasty hard places just beneath the softest part of your anatomy. To those contemplating sleeping on the sand, I tender in all charity Mr. *Punch's* advice to those about to get married—"Don't." Get a more stable foundation. Sand is as ill to sleep on as to build upon.

As nothing happened during the night, we returned to Hai-Cheng in the morning. The Russians were still there, and from no one could any explanation of the night's panic be obtained. However, though not at the point of the bayonet, the town *was* being abandoned, and soon came the order from General Kuropatkin, that the evacuation was to be completed by four o'clock that afternoon. The day was again excessively hot, and the infantry straggled along the road to An-shan-chan as best they could. They were utterly worn out, and kept no formation on their march; how could they—hungry, footsore, burdened with a heavy kit, and the pitiless sun beating down upon them? And so the retreat was carried out; organisation

was lacking, and the men seemed sick at heart; their *morale* had been seriously tried. It appeared to me that here was a brilliant chance for the Japanese cavalry; but advantage was not taken of the opportunity. The hospital trains and rolling-stock generally got away, and without molestation from the enemy the Russians were allowed to fall back, a weary 22 miles to An-shan-chan, where the engineers had constructed defensible works in a range of friendly hills. General Kuropatkin was one of the last to retire; he passed me on horseback as I, too, was making for the north. I stopped once at a *fangtsa* to feed my horse. Numbers of Chinese were about; they eyed the soldiers curiously as they plodded painfully along. It may have been fancy, but I thought I caught a smile of satisfaction flitting over the faces of these "celestials." I passed within a mile or so of the high rocky hills through which the railway in this part of its course runs. Here, close by An-shan-chan ("the saddle-shaped mountain" is the English equivalent of this word), a battle was fought during the Chino-Japanese war of 1894. To-day there were, fortunately for the Russians, no troops to bar their road. I stayed at a small inn that night, and in the morning found the tail of the Russian army marching by, the men so exhausted that they could scarcely move. Three soldiers looked into the inn yard; we bade them enter, and my friend the American correspondent, who had plenty of provisions, gave them tea and tinned sausages. Poor fellows, they were pathetically

thankful, and told us they had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours.

General Kuropatkin halted his force at An-shan-chan, sorely in need of a little rest. He is said to have retired from Hai-Cheng without giving battle, in consequence of a report brought by a distinguished Cossack officer, that two divisions of Japanese were already round his right flank—a report which proved inaccurate. Of the need of the army for rest there could be no doubt, for, apart from the many killed and wounded, there were, as I was informed by a member of the Medical Corps, 2000 cases of sunstroke during the fighting at Ta-shi-chao and Hai-Cheng, and the retreat to An-shan-chan. Some of the military attachés with Kuropatkin's personal staff had a narrow escape during the retreat; among them Sir Montagu Gerard, the chief of the British Mission. The attachés had ridden out to see the expected rearguard action as Hai-Cheng was evacuated. No action, as a matter of fact, was fought; but the attachés, going beyond the Russian lines, suddenly found themselves facing the Japanese, 600 yards away. They turned and galloped back, pursued by the bullets of the Japanese. Such are some of the adventures of lookers-on at the war-game.

It was at Hai-Cheng that we learnt the sad news of the death of Count Keller—killed in the battle of Kuchitze on the eastern hills a day or two after I had left that army. He had gone to watch the firing of a battery. Whilst there, a

Japanese shrapnel burst in front of the guns, and the Count received in his body over thirty bullets. His death caused general sorrow in the army, especially in his own command, where he was intensely popular. He was a courteous gentleman, and as brave a soldier as ever bestrode a horse. In the fight in which he lost his life his troops were also defeated, and were obliged to retreat nearer Liao-Yang. Thus in the east, as on the south, the tide of war was forcing back the Russians.

CHAPTER XIII

NOTES ON THE RUSSIAN FIELD FORCE

ONE effect of the retreat of both wings of the Russian army—that of Baron Stackelberg's and that lately commanded by Count Keller—was to bring General Kuropatkin's forces closer together. It was in the early days of August disposed in semicircular formation in positions stretching from An-shan-chan in the south to Anping in the east. Roughly equidistant from each was Liao-Yang, where great efforts were made to complete and strengthen the fortifications. Another measure now adopted by the Russians was to cut down the tall *kowliang* in front of their positions to within some two feet of the ground. By this means, while obtaining a clear field of fire for themselves, the short sharp stubble left would seriously hinder the Japanese, by preventing their troops lying down with any ease. At An-shan-chan also extensive defensive works were made, there being, besides the main position and the outposts, a third position between the other two. The lesson taught by the shallow trenches of Wa-fang-ho had been taken to heart, and at An-shan-chan the trenches were all deep and narrow. There were

besides these trenches, closed redoubts of strong profile and traverses with a ditch, placed some 600 yards apart, and each containing a company of infantry. Besides all this there were plenty of gun emplacements, and pits for eight guns each, eight guns constituting a battery. Anping, too, was prepared for defence. In this direction the Japanese army under General Kuroki was menacing the Russian left flank, and, as the event proved, was more dangerous to the safety of Liao-Yang than the force under General Oku, whose advance it was General Zarubaieff's task at An-shan-chan to prevent. There was now a pause of some three weeks, during which, so far as the Manchurian army was concerned, there was little hard fighting. Not that the times were uneventful. At Liao-Yang, which I now made my headquarters, we heard the news of the world—newspapers were published which told of the desperate sortie and dispersal of the Port Arthur fleet; of the preparations for the sailing of Admiral Rozhdestvensky, and of the birth of an heir to the throne of Russia. All these and many other things were known within a day or two of their occurrence, and according to the tenor of the tidings our spirits rose and fell. But our preoccupation was with our own affairs. The opportunity was now offered me of noting several interesting points in the Russian organisation. From the high hills overlooking the railway near An-shan-chan a magnificent view of the country could be obtained, extending north to Liao-Yang and south to Hai-Cheng, whilst to the

west were the Liao-ho and Tai-tze-ho. These hills were naturally selected as heliograph stations, though curiously enough, although Manchuria is a country eminently suitable for using the "helio," the Russians took comparatively little advantage of the fact. They used the heliograph at Ta-shi-chao and in the eastern hills, but there was nothing like the general use made of the apparatus by the British army in South Africa. Signalling by flag I only saw once throughout the campaign. The Russians make considerable use of the field telegraph, but their favourite method of communication is the telephone; wherever you go, with no matter how small a force, you will see the telephone wire stretched snake-like along the ground, dangling from the branches of the trees, or fixed to the walls of houses. When, as often happened, these wires were stretched across a road they became a great nuisance at night-time, being at just the height as you rode along to catch you across the chest, or worse, the throat. In the eastern army the field telephone was made use of in a very prompt and practical manner. The map of the country was divided into squares, numbered one, two, three, and so on. The artillery were not always able to judge on which part of the enemy's position to fire, but every battery had its telephone communicating with the General Officer Commanding, who, according to the necessities of the case, transmitted orders to fire on number such-and-such a square. Besides all the methods mentioned, another was used at night which was reminiscent of olden times. Posts were

stationed at all the fords and passes and along the hillsides to watch the road, and whenever anyone passed any of these posts a fire would be lit, and burn brightly for a few minutes, to inform the next guards of the approach of strangers.

Besides the Japanese, whose attack was constantly expected, there were now four or five other matters which afforded much food for reflection. One thing that impressed itself strongly was the absence of food—in sufficient quantity—for the body; many were the complaints from staff officers of the insufficiency of supplies and of transport. On paper everything had been provided for, but in actuality the system was most faulty—not that the Russians have a monopoly in discrepancy between fact and theory. Another little straw indicated a weak point in the organisation of the field force. When the Japanese took Ta-shi-chao, Yinkow, and a day or two later Nuichwang, fell into their hands, though not without a sharp little fight, in which General Kosagovsky had been wounded. I had visited the General in hospital at Hai-Cheng and heard of the fight, but it appeared that a whole week elapsed before the news was reported to Baron Stackelberg. Tokio, St. Petersburg, London, Paris, and New York all knew it before the officer who was Kosagovsky's immediate superior. Officers with whom I talked, though still professing confidence in the ultimate issue of the conflict, bitterly complained of this state of affairs, and of the conduct of the war generally. And all the while the Japanese were

informed of every new movement in the Russian army by means of their spies, who must have swarmed in the camp. It was a matter of great difficulty to deal with the spies, for the simple reason that they were to all appearance just ordinary coolies, straw-hatted and blue-robed. It is said that at night they tied dark handkerchiefs over their hats to be able to move about with less chance of being seen. Ugly rumours were spread of these spies resorting to bribery, and one of General Kuropatkin's interpreters was reported to have tampered with the Commander-in-Chief's correspondence, and to have been hanged or shot.

The Hunhutzes now became a real source of trouble in the south, as they had already been in the east. There, when General Rennenkampf was at Si-mat-ze, they used to kill the Cossack who carried the mail, until it was arranged for an escort always to accompany the postman. In the south the Japanese success at Ta-shi-chao, and the fact that the *kowliang* was now high enough to afford cover, stirred the Hunhutzes to activity. The flat country west of An-shan-chan was chosen as their chief "sphere of influence." Solitary men who went along the roads in that district were often never heard of again, or their bodies were discovered mutilated. The brigands became so bold as to infest the main roads between An-shan-chan and Liao-Yang. Two or three attempts were made to blow up bridges, and a train was fired on. A captain of the railway guard, sent to find a suitable place between the towns named for headquarters

for Kuropatkin, was attacked and wounded by Hunhutzes. These brigands were in the pay of the Japanese, and the annoyance they occasioned the Russians may be easily imagined.

We were getting during the middle of August a great deal of rain, if not "the rains" *par excellence.* There were no carefully kept meteorological records, but some idea of the violence of the rains may be gathered from the fact that the Tai-tze-ho rose eight feet in four hours. As a consequence the roads were in an awful condition. In order to walk more easily the Russian soldiers used to take off their long heavy boots and carry them over their shoulders. The vile nature of the roads led to a little adventure, which illustrates a fact I have pointed out already, the popularity of the English in Manchuria. Mounted on my pony I left Liao-Yang one day (August 13th) for An-shan-chan, 20 miles off by the main road, which distance I thought to lessen by taking a short cut. The start was made, but, alas! the path was speedily lost in the waterlogged fields. There was nothing for it but to flounder through the *kowliang* in hope of reaching firmer ground. Every step took me deeper and deeper into the black and sticky mud, till at length my pony stopped, the mud up to his belly. Having dismounted, only to sink to the waist in the mud myself, I thought it best to retrace my steps, and the pony had reached the same conclusion. After much wading through this slough of despond pony and owner arrived hot, hungry, wet, and weary at a village. Thoughts of

Hunhutzes and their summary methods of treating solitary travellers came into my mind, but to get food was essential, and after politely knocking at the gate I entered the yard of a respectable-looking house. Within the house I could see several Chinese placidly gazing at the rain. They took scarcely any notice of me, and when I asked for fodder for the pony they replied monosyllabically, "*Mao*" (Chinese for "no.") Like the lad in the song I wasn't going to take "no" for an answer, so tying up my pony I entered the house, and going up to the men said, "*Ingwa.*" Hearing this they eyed me up and down and fell to discussing my appearance, which from the Bond Street standpoint must have been deplorable. "He certainly is not a Russian," said one, and, having so decided, in a moment their whole demeanour changed. They rushed forward with eager hospitality, took my pony and gave him a feed, brought me into their best room, and insisted on my having tea and *shamee* (a kind of porridge made of small millet and pleasant to the palate). They were delighted to see an Englishman, they said, and asked me all kinds of questions, and examined my telescope and compass with great interest. When the time came for me to go they all came out in the rain to see me off, and one man volunteered to put me on the right road. As some slight recompense for their hospitality I pressed a rouble into my host's hand, but he absolutely declined to take it. This fact in itself is significant, for the Chinese villager is, as a rule, "only too willing"—to use

appropriately, I hope, a much abused phrase—to accept payment for the least act of kindness.

On the day following this incident, General Kuropatkin held a parade of the troops at An-shan-chan to celebrate the birth of the Tsarevitch, and in honour of the two days' old baby all the foreign attachés put on their finest uniforms. The parade was attended by many staff officers, and by a representative detachment of every corps in the district. As a spectacle it was scarcely equal to an Aldershot review. The ground chosen, of necessity, was a *kowliang* field, through which the men, in heavy rain, waded rather than marched past. A band did its best to make us merry, and the Commander-in-Chief in an appropriate little speech told the men that he hoped soon to lead them to victory. And thus we showed our loyalty to the Little Father, and our sympathy in the joys of the Imperial House.

At this time the Japanese, while perfecting arrangements for the next blow, did not, on the southern front, indulge in any useless pin-pricks. They had the great advantage of compelling the Russian force to conform to their own movements, and with this power of initiative were content. There were, of course, occasional meetings of hostile patrols, and one day the Russians on the left flank discovered a Japanese notebook and forage cap. They were found in some sulphur baths five or six miles in advance of the Russian position. These baths, by the way, had an unfortunate history. They originally formed part of a sanatorium put

up by some enterprising company. The buildings were burnt down by the Boxers, and were being rebuilt when the war with Japan broke out. It is not unlikely that some time yet must elapse before the company owning the baths reaps any reward from its undertaking. To return to the military situation. The troops at An-shan-chan, on General Kuropatkin making Liao-Yang again his head-quarters, were placed under the command of General Zarubaieff. On the 17th of August they were distributed as follows:—On the right (west), the 1st Siberian Army Corps; on the left (east), the 2nd Siberian Army Corps; and, a mile or two in the rear, the 4th Siberian Army Corps. General Mischenko held an independent command.

The strength of the Russian Field Army on that day was placed by staff officers at 147,000 men, combatants only. All told, the army was said to number 248,000 men, the various constituents being given thus:—In Port Arthur (soldiers only), 27,350. Vladivostok, 31,850. 1st Siberian Army Corps, 21,400; 2nd S. A. C., 30,600; 4th S. A. C., 21,700; 17th Army Corps (European troops), 16,600; Eastern Detachment, 20,500; 10th A. C., 36,370. At Mukden, 10,950; Engineers, 6350; Frontier Railway Guards, 25,000. To verify these figures was impossible, and they must be taken as official only. Reinforcements, it was said, were arriving rapidly. A staff officer assured me that ten military trains reached Mukden daily; that in four days one division (16 battalions) and three batteries had detrained. Some 6-inch siege

guns, which now reached Liao-Yang, added considerably to the strength of the fortifications. It was obvious that with the passing of every day Kuropatkin's force, both in men and guns, increased. The waste from battle and sickness had not been excessive, so far; Port Arthur apart, the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief reckoned the casualties in battle on their side at 20,000, up to August 25. As to sickness it was very difficult to get information, as one always met with an evasive answer to questions concerning the health of the troops. Probably the staff officers never knew the correct figures; the minute trouble taken over every case of illness in the British army is not imitated in that of Russia. There was a certain amount of dysentery and a little typhoid, the latter of a malignant character. The dysentery was caused by the men eating uncooked vegetables, which were growing abundantly in the gardens of towns and villages. An order was issued forbidding the men to touch uncooked vegetables—it had about as much effect as the order issued in South Africa forbidding the troops to drink dirty water. When men are hungry and thirsty it is impossible to prevent them satisfying their cravings with anything that they can get, however conscious they may be of the danger of so doing. As proof that there were neither sick nor wounded in great numbers, it was averred that of the 138 military hospitals at the theatre of war, only 82 were in use, and in those 5100 beds were empty.

This chapter of *olla podrida* may fittingly

conclude with a reference to the strength of the Japanese. We have seen that Kuropatkin's Staff put their combatants on August 17 at 147,000, with considerable daily additions thereafter; of their enemy they asserted that Japan could not mass a greater number of soldiers against them than 300,000. Though very uncertain as to the full strength of Japan, I ventured to controvert this estimate, and expressed the opinion that a country with as large a population as France, and where conscription had prevailed for twenty years, could in a time of national crisis place in the field an army far exceeding three hundred thousand. Events have justified my belief.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RETREAT FROM AN-SHAN-CHAN

THE period of comparative inactivity had lasted about three weeks. August the 24th brought a great change in the situation. General Kuroki's army was again active—and this was ever the signal for serious events. The Russian left was compelled to give way again, and came in closer to Liao-Yang. At the same time, General Oku threatened An-shan-chan, and thither I went (August 25th), to find the Japanese making a reconnaissance in force—the preliminary to a big battle, as all supposed. General Zarubaieff was fully prepared for an attack, the troops had recovered their *morale*; throughout his command there was an anxious desire to avenge previous defeats. Daylight on August 26th found our outposts engaged all along the front. A gun boomed now and then in the grey dawn like the prologue to some great drama.

But the firing died away, and the morning passed with nothing more than desultory shots. Towards the afternoon the Russian batteries awoke. The gunners either saw or were informed of the position of the Japanese, and opened fire,

covering the country with bouquets of white smoke which rose from the bursting shrapnel. To view the fight I had betaken myself to the top of the saddle-shaped mountain directly above the main position of the Russians, and from that vantage ground could locate every one of the batteries below. (There were six or seven in action, all carefully concealed, as at Ta-shi-chao, where gun-pits were purposely made on the crests of hills, with intent to deceive, the guns being in reality placed below the hilltops. This lesson of hiding the guns had been taught at Wa-fang-ho and earlier battles.) The day was dark and cloudy, and the flash from the guns and from the shells bursting in the distance showed livid against the dull sky. Save for the boom of the guns and the shriek of the shells the air was perfectly still. Fascinated by the magnificent sight I stayed on the hilltop till nightfall.

When I left, the troops were preparing themselves for a cold rainy night in the trenches. The day's work had been preliminary; the Japanese, too, had used their artillery, searching the Russian positions. The morrow seemed destined to witness the decisive battle. Coming down from the hill I made my way to the railway station, hoping to find an empty carriage in which to sleep. The previous night had been spent on a bench with the rain dripping down my neck, and I was determined to enjoy something really luxurious on this occasion—something, that is, which should be wind and water proof. The waiting-room of the station I found

converted into a hospital, for some 300 men had been wounded during the day. The condition of some of the wounded was pitiable. Those who had been brought in from the outpost lines could be distinguished by the mud which covered them. The only possible sleeping-places were some horse-trucks in which were wounded men; in one of these trucks the head-doctor gave me leave to pass the night. I lay close to an officer terribly injured by the bursting of a shrapnel, three bullets having entered his stomach. His groans never ceased till death came in mercy to end his sufferings. He had a wife and family to mourn him, and just before his death asked one of the nurses to write a note for him to his wife. Viewing the mangled body, in my ears the cries of agony from other lips, I thought bitterly of the insensate passions which produce such misery and pain. If only the nations could realise the horror of it, there would surely be less fighting!

Such musings of the night season are none the less true in the sunshine, but with the dawn come other thoughts also—thoughts of the two armies yonder in the hills, of the courage and fortitude of the soldiers, their loyalty and tenacity of purpose, and one seems to see that even war is not wholly evil.

As the shadows of night began to pass away, I left the railway station to return to my observation post on the hill. The outposts had fallen back, and the artillery had come into the main position. An air of depression was plainly observable in a

group of three or four officers whom I questioned as to the situation. They were silent at first. But what was the use of keeping back news that must shortly be common property? so presently one of the officers said—

"The order to retire has been given."

Then followed the explanation. During the past two days General Kuroki had attacked the eastern army with great vigour near Lan-jan-san, and had captured important positions which enabled him to threaten the left flank of the An-shan-chan army. Thereupon General Kuropatkin thought it expedient to lessen his front and fall back on the very strong position prepared at Liao-Yang. At An-shan-chan both officers and men were much disappointed that they were not allowed to offer battle to the Japanese. From the spectacular point of view I shared the disappointment; never again in a lifetime might I find a position so perfectly placed for witnessing a battle as was the hill whereon I sat in relation to the two armies below.

Meanwhile day had broken, and through our glasses masses of Japanese infantry could be made out marching along the hills eastward. Turning our gaze southward towards Hai-Cheng, snake-like columns of the enemy were seen extending rapidly over the plains. Truly the whole Japanese army seemed in motion. Beneath us were two or three Cossack outposts. Sweeping the valley with my telescope, beyond these outposts I espied a body of cavalrymen advancing cautiously in our direction.

Turning to the officers near by, "I think those men are Japanese," I ventured to remark. The officers looked and laughed. "No," they said, "they are our men." Convinced that I was right I offered to bet one hundred roubles that the men were Japanese, but found no "takers." The cavalrymen were lost to sight for a while in the *kowliang*, from which they presently emerged close to a Cossack post. The Cossacks did not detect their presence, but it was otherwise with the Japanese, for such in truth they were now seen to be. Dismounting, they left their horses in a village, went forward on foot, and having ascertained what they wanted to know concerning the disposition of the Russians, walked back to their horses, mounted and rode away. It was a little drama played out under our eyes, and not without its lesson on the fortunes of the war generally. I say "beneath our eyes," but the Russian officers had this excuse—they were for the most part either without glasses or provided with very indifferent ones. They were always glad when opportunity offered to borrow the telescope of a correspondent or attaché.

All this while the retreat of the main Russian force was going on; everywhere was bustle and movement. Long lines of transport were streaming northward towards Liao-Yang; train after train left the railway station for the same destination; regiments took the route with standards flying and bands playing, making a brave show whatever their feelings in being compelled to execute "a strategic movement to the rear." The sight, had the troops

been advancing instead of retiring, would indeed have been inspiriting—solid masses of infantry and artillery, with thousands of bayonets glittering in the sunshine, passed steadily along hour after hour. The woodwork of the railway station was taken down, and preparations made to burn any stores that in the end it might prove impossible to transport. It became at length necessary to consider my own retreat, as, having lent my horse to an officer, I didn't wish to have to tramp through the awful roads the twenty-two miles to Liao-Yang. So, not waiting to see the rearguard action, obviously inevitable in view of the rapid approach of the Japanese, I left my hill and took a seat in one of the last trains to leave An-shan-chan. We steamed slowly away, and, entering the plains, drew up for the night at a siding some ten miles on the road to Liao-Yang. Looking back late in the evening a red glare was seen to light up An-shan-chan — abandoned (for ever?) by the Russians. Down the slopes of the hills came the Russian rearguard. They had been closely pressed by the enemy, and had lost a whole battery. This battery had stuck in the mud, and all the efforts to move it failed. Teams of horses and strings of men were brought up to pull at the guns, but without effect; they sank lower and lower in the mire. Soon the Japanese from behind began firing at the battery; every minute men and horses fell dead or wounded. One shrapnel killed outright Colonel Von Raben of the Imperial Guards, and General Rudkovsky, the gallant officer who commanded the rear-

guard. The efforts to get the guns along were now abandoned—the battery was left as a present to the Japanese. The night of the retreat, General Stackelberg passed on to Liao-Yang to report to General Kuropatkin. By an officer of his Staff I was told that a telegram had been received announcing the fall of Port Arthur. It was a false rumour, for the great assault on the fortress had been gloriously repulsed, but the report found credence among the Staff, and added to the gloom in the army.

The next day I returned to Liao-Yang. There needed no telling that the spirit of war was brooding over the city. Liao-Yang was no longer simply the advanced base of the Russian army; it was the central position upon which even now, from east and south, the forces of Kuropatkin were concentrating. For the first time the trembling citizens could hear the noise of battle, which rumbled from the eastern hills. In that direction fate had been indeed unkind to the troops of the Tsar. General Ivanoff, who had succeeded Count Keller, had lost several guns and had had to abandon Sui-lin-tze to General Kuroki, the 10th Army Corps having been previously forced to retreat from Anping. Riding out along the Anping road I met the Russians retiring. Solidly, sullenly, unhasting, unpausing, they came back to take their places in the positions already prepared nearer Liao-Yang. South and west the troops from An-shan-chan were occupying other points in the line of defence.

What a wonderful and never-to-be-forgotten sight the plain presented on that 29th of August! No watcher from the old pagoda had ever seen its like before. There one might recognise the familiar features—the railway running due north and south, the Tai-tze-ho, now swift and deep, sweeping round the northern walls and then glittering away to the west, the hills to north and east where the valley of the river narrowed, and, looking south and west, the fertile fields dotted with many villages. All these things might be seen, but to-day they formed but the framework of the picture. For round the wall of the ancient city was a vast army, collected to decide whether Tsar or Mikado should henceforth be master. Transport trains, ammunition columns, parks of artillery, moved hither and thither to their allotted posts; the frightened villagers fled to the town, staff officers in brilliant uniforms passed by, and everywhere in orderly disorder the soldiers sought their proper camping-ground. In that huge host were men from every part of the Russian Empire—Mongolians from Transbaikalia, Caucasians, Daghestanis, the brave Siberians, reservists torn from homes in far-off Europe; the Pole, the Finn, the Moslem, and the Jew, all were there. Within the walls there was agitation and fear among the Chinese population, augmented as it was by many refugees. The streets were packed with anxious faces. None dreaded the morrow more than these poor people who had seen their villages seized and their crops destroyed by the foreigners, and who now feared,

with good cause, that the shells of the enemy—however unintentionally—might batter down their walls and houses, and make desolate their homes.

As the watcher in the pagoda, or from the city wall, gazed on this picture, the far-off sound of guns and the sight of a shell bursting in the eastern hills served to stimulate the imagination and convince him that the great battle, so long delayed, was about to open. It could not indeed be otherwise. Hitherto both the Russian and Japanese armies had been divided, now each was concentrated and in close proximity. Now must the carefully constructed fortifications around Liao-Yang be put to the test; now, in short, must the issue be joined. No longer could the Russians use their self-consolatory phrase, "The war has not yet begun"—the coming issue would be a true test of strength, a fight to a finish; perchance a Sedan.

Thoughts such as these formed themselves as I gazed admiringly at the magnificent spectacle. Except for "the distant and random gun," the fighting had ceased. There was in the air the hush of expectation—the calm before the storm burst. And in full fury the battle raged on the morrow.

CHAPTER XV

THE BATTLE OF LIAO-YANG OPENS

JUST as the first streak of dawn illumined the sky, on the morning of the 30th of August, the first gun boomed. The battle of Liao-Yang had begun. Before attempting to describe this memorable fight —the biggest artillery battle of which history has record—a few words must be given to the disposition of the troops engaged. The Russians occupied a line of rocky hills which, at a distance of something over three miles south of Liao-Yang, rise precipitously from the level plain and sweep round in a half-circle eastward to the Tai-tze-ho. These hills extend west only as far as the railway line running south to An-shan-chan. Beyond the railway the country is perfectly flat, and in August is covered with high *kowliang*. In this direction on the extreme right of the Russian position was General Mischenko's cavalry; next to them, more cavalry under General Gourko (a son of the famous field-marshal), and then, posted in a line of villages coming right up to the railway, part of the 1st Siberian Army Corps. The duty of this right wing was to protect the railway line. Immediately east of the railway rises Shushan Hill, occupied by

the remainder of the 1st Siberian Army Corps. This corps was under the command of Lieut.-General Baron Stackelberg, who had his head-quarters on Shushan Hill. The hills extending eastward of Shushan were held by the 2nd and 3rd Siberian Army Corps. On the right bank of the Tai-tze-ho (Liao-Yang being on the left bank) were the 10th and 17th European Army Corps, under General Baron Bilderling. They held a very strong position, and were charged with the duty of preventing the Japanese cutting the Russian communications with the north. Besides the corps named, General Kuropatkin had at his disposal the 4th and 5th Siberian Army Corps and a large part of the 1st European Army Corps. These were held in reserve in the plain of Liao-Yang. It is hard to estimate the number of troops in all, as many battalions were much under strength. But Kuropatkin's army at Liao-Yang was about 200,000 strong.

As to the enemy, General Oku's troops opposed the Russian right and centre; General Nodzu the centre and left; while farther east was General Kuroki, whose object it was to force the passage of the Tai-tze-ho and get behind the Russian main body.

Such is a brief outline of the general situation. A few details may be added concerning that part of the army with which I was posted and the particular force opposing it. The 1st Siberian Army Corps numbered about 20,000 infantry, possessed 70 or 80 guns, 8 machine guns, and

included Gourko's cavalry. It had to hold a position extending from six and a half to seven versts (*i.e.* some five miles), so that there were about 3000 men per verst. General Oku, our assailant, had two divisions and ten or twelve batteries. He occupied hilly country 3000 to 4000 yards distant from the Russian positions. Shushan Hill, the central point of Stackelberg's force, is 462 feet high, and is a very rocky eminence. On its eastern side, in a gap separating it from the next hill, runs the main road to An-shan-chan; at its western foot is the railway. From the An-shan-chan road a path goes up the hill through a grove of magnificent firs to the summit, crowned by a curious stone building, ancient and very strongly made and in appearance like a truncated tower or large cairn. In this tower, which served as Baron Stackelberg's headquarters, had been placed the field telephone. The position, both at Shushan and all along the front, was a distinctly strong one. The trenches had been laid out with great skill and afforded good cover. One trench was dug just below the stone tower on the side facing the Japanese, and it commanded a capital view of the country over which the enemy must attack. Trenches and gun emplacements for three batteries extended down the hill towards the Japanese position. The batteries of the Corps were in general placed in pairs in gaps of the hills, and everything was done to protect and conceal them. In the plain extending behind the position to Liao-Yang were hospitals and field ambulances, artillery parks and regimental trans-

port. It was a scene of continuous movement. From the railway, light lines of rails had been laid down which ran to the rear of the hills, and along these lines trolleys loaded up from the railway were pushed by soldiers. In this manner the ammunition was supplied to the artillery parks. From the parks it was transferred by waggon to the limbers, and from the limbers taken to the batteries by hand. A similar system was adopted by the field ambulances. Stretcher-bearers carried the wounded from the firing line to dressing-stations placed beyond the range of the enemy's guns. First-aid having been rendered at these stations, the men were taken to the ambulances, and thence to the field hospital or to the train, and so to Liao-Yang.

These details will, I trust, enable those of my readers unversed in military technicalities to understand something of the mechanism of the battle. I must now ask them to accompany me to the firing line. It is early morning, yet the guns are already thundering in chorus. With General Stackelberg we climb up Shushan Hill and take our post in the deep trench in front of the stone tower already described. Six-fifteen a.m., and from our post overlooking the railway right round the eastern hills the battle is raging. Only the firing of artillery as yet, but it is a gigantic "only." Both sight and sound are astonishing,—terrifying. The whole line of hills is wreathed in clouds of white smoke. Each separate ball of snow, bursting in the air 20 to 30 feet above the hills,

is a shrapnel raining bullets on the foe beneath. They come unceasingly, unerringly,—60 to 70 shells burst on the Russian position at the same moment. The air is torn with the continuous roar, altogether baffling description. It is like the multitudinous waves of ocean dashing in fiercest fury against a rock-bound shore. Hurtling through the air, the shells whistle and shriek in agony; it seems that nothing living can withstand them.

To the tremendous cannonade of the Japanese the Russian guns made vigorous reply. On both sides the firing was maintained without intermission for over five hours. What damage the Russians did the enemy we could not well make out; on Shushan and the neighbouring hills the terrible fire had many a victim, but owing to the well-constructed trenches the loss of life was not so great as the tornado of lead seemed to portend. At half-past eleven General Oku brought his infantry into play. Under cover of an artillery fire, even hotter than before, the Japanese troops advanced, with the object of turning our right. With eager, strained attention we watched them advance towards the trenches lined with the Siberians. When about 800 yards from the Russian position the Japanese were obliged to leave cover. This was the moment for which the Russians had waited. They rose in their trenches and fired a volley point blank at the foe. The Japanese line quivered, many a man fell never to rise, but the survivors pressed on. It might not be that they should win; volley after

volley rang out from the Russian rifles, and the Japanese ranks crumbled like a sand-castle before the advancing tide. The few men left wavered, and turned; the first assault had been repulsed. None but the bravest troops could have faced such a terrific fire at all.

Meanwhile the Japanese artillery had made a target of the tower on Shushan. They had got the range to a nicety, a fact which it was impossible quite to appreciate, and shell after shell, even bouquets of shrapnel at a time, burst over our heads. There one sat squeezed against the parapet, watching shrapnel bullets plant themselves in a pattern on the opposite side of the trench. Against the stone tower where was the telephone the bullets rained like hail. It was impossible to leave the trench, save at great risk; and, as the telephone was not sufficient, communication down the hill was established by a line of men who lay flat on their stomachs and passed the notes written by the general from hand to hand, moving their bodies as little as possible. Under this severe bombardment we suffered several casualties, though fewer than might be imagined. One soldier lying close to me had his rifle broken in two by a fragment of shell case; another man got two shrapnel bullets through his leg, because he would stick it out too far in order to get ease. During all this trying time Baron Stackelberg sat calm and cool, writing his orders, and occasionally raising himself to look over the top of the parapet,—a dangerous proceeding, as, whenever we showed a head,

it at once became the target of some Japanese gunner.

Below us and on our right, the Russian gunners worked and sweated, prodigal of life. They resembled nothing so much as stokers shovelling on the coal at the trial trip of a new torpedo boat. No finer example of bravery and endurance than that given by these gunners have I seen. The Japanese had the exact range of nearly every battery, and their shrapnel rained death on the devoted Sibèrians. Where they fell, they lay, and instantly new men stepped into their places. The blood of the dead bespattered the guns, their bodies jammed against the wheels; but what was the worth of a dead soldier? Other hands must feed the gun, send another shell whirring towards the enemy. Never must the battery be silenced. And so hour after hour they worked on.

Towards five o'clock the Japanese tried another —this time a greater—turning movement on our right. Reserve battalions from Liao-Yang, with General Mischenko's cavalry, opposed this movement, and a fierce engagement followed. It was difficult to see clearly what was happening; but the infantry fire was furious, it sounded like the crackling of an angry fire.

Determined to view this fight at closer quarters, I left the shelter of the trench and ran down the hill. I had reached the bottom without mishap, when a shrapnel burst just above my head. I heard the bullets rattling all round, and saw a soldier who had been following me fall to the ground. Calling

another man to my aid, we gently lifted the stricken soldier and carried him to a dressing-station. Blood covered his face, his neck, and his chest. Our help was needless—he was dead.

Turning to cross to the right flank I passed two or three men burying a fallen comrade, and noted the blood-stained paths along which an endless train of wounded were being borne—those who could be moved whilst the fight still raged. Presently I reached the battery of the 3rd Trans-baikal Horse Artillery, the gunners doing their best to silence a Japanese battery posted in a village some 3000 yards away, and which all the day had enfiladed some of the Russian trenches. (Mr. Baring accompanied this battery for months, sharing its dangers and going into action with it on all occasions—sometimes under a very hot fire.[1]) The Japanese attack was being very vigorously met, but the tall *kowliang* and the numerous villages in which the troops were placed made it difficult to comprehend what was happening. Determination was opposed to determination, and as often as the Japanese showed in the open, the crackle of infantry fire greeted them. And all the while the gunners stuck grimly to their task, making the earth itself vibrate with the shock of the exploding shells. To move was to court danger, and from out of a field or village, apparently deserted, would come a sudden gust of bullets whistling around one in a most unpleasant manner.

[1] Mr. Baring has told his story in a book entitled *With the Russians in Manchuria.*

Had every bullet found a living billet that day, both armies would have been annihilated. It takes a ton of lead to each man killed—which is a very pretty calculation, writing after the event, and counting the numbers engaged and the casualties suffered; but creeping along by the trenches here in the open plain, with bullets singing by every second, the thought, even should it occur to one, presents no comfort.

Darkness was now falling, and it betokened a temporary cessation of the conflict. The great turning movement on the right had been almost completely repulsed — not entirely, for to the desperate valour of the Japanese the Russians had been forced to yield one village. With this exception Baron Stackelberg held all his positions. For an hour or two there would be a slight, a very slight, relaxation of the strain on commander and men. I turned back to the town to send off a message to London; was there not the great British public to be considered, avid for news of battle, served "hot and hot"? On the way to Liao-Yang I passed fresh battalions of the 1st European Army Corps marching proudly to the front to the accompaniment of a lively tune—a different spectacle this to the melancholy train of wounded men seen a little earlier. The sight of these fresh troops was inspiriting, it acted like a tonic after a very trying day.

CHAPTER XVI

SECOND DAY OF THE BATTLE

DESULTORY firing on the Russian right continued throughout the night. In the centre more serious work was in hand. All the day the troops holding that position—the 3rd Siberian Army Corps, under General Ivanoff—had been subjected to as murderous a cannonade from the batteries of General Nodzu as had those of Baron Stackelberg on Shushan. Darkness to them brought no relief, for during the night the Japanese infantry threw themselves against impossible positions with a courage unequalled by the most reckless of Dervish warriors charging a British square. Their dead lay in hundreds round the Russian trenches. Furious as were their assaults, and great as were the Russian losses, every charge was repulsed. Morning dawned to see the gallant 3rd Siberians holding their own. On the right, to the west of the railway, the Japanese had also attacked the troops in the plain and driven them back a few hundred yards. Early in the morning the Russian infantry drove them out, and regained their old positions.

If the night had been thus filled with tumult

and the clash of bayonets, the 31st of August was but a few hours old when the great artillery duel recommenced. Again the white clouds wreathed the whole line of the Russian hills, again the roar of guns continued in ceaseless fury, again the bursting shrapnel rained down leaden death. By six o'clock the battle had recommenced along the whole line. To-day, however, the character of the fight changed. Without relaxing his bombardment of the hills held by Baron Stackelberg, General Oku realised that the weak spot in the Russian position was the extreme right, that is the flat plain west of the railway. Could this be turned, the railway might be gained and the whole Russian position threatened. To turn this right was only possible by the free use of infantry, and with such men as his, to whom death was a glorious privilege, anything might be attempted. So the day was to prove one of close fighting and trench storming, when, with the lust of blood in the eye, men surge forward eager to flesh the cruel bayonet in the bodies of the foe. Seldom, however, does the resolution of the defenders hold before the glint of cold steel, though here and there were cases of men standing their ground to the last.

Far out to the west Japanese troops began moving north, presently to close in on the trenches and villages held by the enemy. At a quarter past seven in the morning they attacked one of the trenches on the Russian extreme right, and carried it after furious resistance. The company which

had rushed the trench were without supports, and from their trench came no sound. A hundred yards away was another trench held by the Russians. The tension was too great for one young Russian. Raising himself he dashed across to the Japanese trench. Then came a cry of joy. "My comrades," he shouted back, "they have no more ammunition." Up leapt the Russians then, and in five minutes not a Japanese was left alive in the trench—the bayonet had done its work. Throughout the morning attack after attack was made by the Japanese, and little by little they made good their hold. The fighting was very close, and trenches were taken and retaken more than once. At 12.35 p.m. General Stackelberg on Shushan Hill received an urgent message from Major-General Kondratovitch—one of the commanders on the extreme right—asking for reinforcements. But there were none to give, and Stackelberg sent back word that Kondratovitch and his men "must die at their post"—the last duty of a soldier.

Let us leave this hard-pressed right flank for the time and return to the tower on Shushan. From 6.45 a.m. the hill had been violently bombarded by Oku's gunners. The Russians replied with equal vigour, and forced one Japanese battery to retire. The position on the hill became, however, one of increasing danger, the enemy concentrating a cross shrapnel fire upon it despite all the efforts of the Russian gunners. Baron Stackelberg was forced to leave the trench below the tower and

take refuge within that building, against which the bullets were pattering like large hail-stones against the window-pane. More troublesome than the bombardment of the trenches was the bursting of shrapnel among the Russian reserves. As early as half-past six the Japanese had shelled a village which held reserves for the trenches on our flank, now their artillery sought out the reserves lying among the rocks on the Liao-Yang side of the hills. Informed doubtless of the exact position of these reserves by Chinese spies, the guns had located the Russian reserves exactly, and the dreaded shrapnel poured down on them as they lay utterly unable to reply. To lie still and be shot at is perhaps the most trying experience of the soldier; the highest test of discipline, one which the finest troops cannot always stand, as was proved at Plevna when General Skobeloff in one of the battles repelled a counter-attack of the Turks by firing, not on their front line, but on the reserves, who fled in panic, drawing the fighting-line after them. Suffering much from the fire of the Japanese gunners the *morale* of these reservists was seriously shaken, and a panic among them might be fraught with serious consequences. Seeing this, General Stackelberg left the tower and went down to the men, reminding them of their duty to their Emperor, and exhorting them to stand firm. His words, fitly chosen, had the desired effect.

The day was going badly for Stackelberg's troops, and the General began to consider the

possibility of having to retire. He was suffering from illness, and had received a severe contusion on the leg, which caused him much pain. But throughout he exhibited remarkable endurance, giving his orders calmly amid the rain of bullets. Seeing that the outer line of trenches beyond the railway could not be held much longer, at 4.15 p.m. an engineer battalion, at Stackelberg's orders, began to dig trenches about 1000 yards in their rear. In these trenches the General placed a battalion, whose duty it was, by their sudden and unexpected appearance, to delay the Japanese after the outer trenches had been evacuated. The position of the right flank, in view of the repeated attacks of the Japanese, whose turning movement had now fully developed, became extremely critical, so much so that at a quarter to six in the evening General Stackelberg found it necessary to issue orders that the troops were not to retire without permission. It was a variant on the order to Kondratovitch, to die at his post. There was every need for resolution, for every half-hour the Japanese attacks increased in intensity, and, despite everything, the right wing had to give way before their impetuosity. At this period (6.40 p.m.) the shrapnel of the enemy was bursting with such rapidity as to resemble infantry fire. On the Russian side the firing was not so rapid, a battery which should be able to fire ninety-six rounds a minute (*i.e.* twelve rounds each gun in the minute) was not firing more than sixty-four, which is about the quickest gun-fire on the Russian side that I have seen. Moreover, on

the Russian side, ammunition for the guns was running short; the loaded limbers, urgently asked for at 5.45 p.m., did not arrive till seven o'clock. During the hottest of the firing it took an hour to send a note from Shushan, a distance of 400 yards, and get a reply, a fact which emphasises the utility of signalling with a flag.

The Russian batteries suffered terribly, despite the fact that they had been well extended. Yet it was not always the most exposed guns which suffered most. At the moment when the Japanese flankers threatened to come close to the railway, one battery of the 9th Division sent forward two guns right into the open. Unprepared for such a change of position, the Japanese guns were not able to alter their range properly, and these two guns suffered no loss. Again, one battery in the gun-pits of the same division had about a hundred casualties in a very short time, whilst another battery close to it was not hit at all. The battery which had been so severely punished then shifted its position a little, and thereafter suffered no loss, the Japanese gunners continuing to fire at its former emplacement.

As the evening drew on I rode out towards the right flank. As we have seen, it had been desperately engaged all day long, and now had been driven back almost flat against the railway, the embankment of which afforded the troops cover. Artillery parks, ambulances, hospitals, and transport had been obliged to retire towards Liao-Yang. Again I passed, as on the previous day, along

strings of wounded men all dappled with blood, some pale and wan, others tossing about on the ambulance groaning or shrieking in their pain. And here and there, in a dark pool of blood, lay some form still in death.

The day was now ended, and with the setting of the summer sun the firing ceased all along the line. The 3rd Siberian Army Corps had had its full share of the day's work, and had again repulsed all the assaults of General Nodzu. Save for the driving in of our extreme right, the whole Russian position south of Liao-Yang was intact. Not a battery had been silenced. The whole brunt of the fighting had fallen on the 1st and 3rd Siberian Corps. Of the losses as a whole I need not now speak, but a few instances of regimental loss may bring to the minds of some readers a more vivid idea of the intensity of the battle than any word-pictures are able to do. In the two days fighting the 34th East Siberian Regiment lost 1700 men killed and wounded—several companies at the end of the second day were without officers. I was told by a staff officer that one battalion of this regiment went into action, on the 30th, 600 strong, and on the night of the 31st had only 80 men left. The 35th East Siberian R.R. lost 35 per cent. of its effective strength, whilst the officer commanding the East Siberian Artillery Brigade Division (four batteries) reported that he had lost 124 killed and 40 wounded. The disproportion between killed and wounded illustrates the terrible nature of shrapnel fire—the shell bursting overhead, the

bullets from it cause chiefly head wounds, which are, as everybody knows, usually fatal.

The men had been fighting from 3.20 a.m. to 8.0 p.m., and were still in good heart. This day, and the previous day, the Commander-in-Chief directed the battle from his train on the railway near to the town, but on each day he had mounted his horse and gone the round of the whole line, speaking words of encouragement to the men and consulting with the generals. The spirit of the Siberian troops was unbroken, and they were preparing to face the morrow with confidence. The Siberians were also heartened by a message from General Kuropatkin, that all was going well—that the Japanese were "crushed." We had perhaps not seen much of the "crushing" on our immediate front, but we took it to mean, at least, that the enemy had failed in his object. The message, alas, was nothing but a "campaign lie," which the 1st Siberians bitterly realised when, just as the fighting ceased for the day, Baron Stackelberg received an order from General Kuropatkin to retire. It was with chagrin and disappointment the order was obeyed. The positions held were not immediately evacuated, parts of the 2nd and 4th Siberian Army Corps coming to relieve us, and the 3rd Siberian Army Corps closing up slightly to our left. The relief, fortunately for the Russians, passed unnoticed by General Oku, or the moment would have been chosen to renew the attack. General Stackelberg, however, withdrew his troops in the most masterly manner, and afforded the foe no inkling of what he

was doing. It was a chance missed by the usually vigilant enemy. As it was, the Japanese just before midnight made an assault on what had been the extreme left of the 1st Siberians. The position was then held by the 3rd Siberians, who, encouraged by a message from Baron Stackelberg to hold out at all costs, gallantly repelled the enemy.

It is time now to explain the reason for Baron Stackelberg's recall, which was the first step in a withdrawal of the whole army from the position so tenaciously held during the two days. Before the battle began a council of war had been held at Liao-Yang, at which it was unanimously decided to fight the battle out to a finish—to conquer or to die. That this was the intention of General Kuropatkin himself is beyond question. What, then, was the cause of the sudden change of plan, seeing that both Generals Oku and Nodzu, with the exception indicated, had failed to shake the Russian position? It lay in the action of General Kuroki. The reader will remember that in the general sketch of the position of the two armies, at the beginning of the battle, Kuroki's troops were on the extreme right of the Japanese army, where the hills closed down on the valley of the Tai-tze-ho. Kuroki naturally had not been idle, and the success which had hitherto attended his operations did not desert him. He was able on the afternoon of the second day to force the passage of the river at a ford called Bensihu, 25 miles to the east of Liao-Yang, and to threaten the 10th and 17th European Army Corps.

The Japanese horns were now closing round Kuropatkin. When, together with the news that Kuroki was across the Tai-tze-ho, General Kuropatkin was informed by his Intelligence Officers that he had with him four divisions, the Russian Commander-in-Chief was staggered. He had understood that Kuroki's force numbered no more than two divisions, and, believing his communications with the north to be in imminent danger, he at once decided to withdraw from the outer fortifications in the hills south and east of Liao-Yang to the inner line nearer the city, and to send his tried Siberian troops to the aid of the two European Corps who had to meet the attack of Kuroki on the farther side of the river. Thus in a few hours the whole situation was changed. Afterwards the Russians learned to their great disgust that the report received by Kuropatkin had exactly doubled the strength of Kuroki, and that that General had, in fact, only two divisions with him when he crossed the Tai-tze-ho. General Kuropatkin blamed his faulty Intelligence Department for causing him to retreat; but excuses don't win battles. There is no doubt that the strength generally of the Japanese at Liao-Yang was overestimated by the Russians. The defenders (and the losers) had the stronger position and the greater number of men. However, at this time (evening of 31st of August), the battle was by no means lost, though, by abandoning the outer fortifications, the Russians gave the enemy a position which commanded both the inner fortifica-

tions and the town of Liao-Yang. The inner fortifications were nevertheless of great strength, and could be held indefinitely, so that if the troops across the river were able to defeat Kuroki and cut off his retreat, the battle might yet be won by the Russians. General Kuropatkin gained this one advantage by retiring into the inner position —his front was less extended and could be the better defended. Though superior in force to his enemy, his troops were hardly sufficient to hold the outer line of the 30th and 31st of August.

The transition from the sublime to the ridiculous is one easily made. All day long I had witnessed the tragedy of men "made in the image of God" bringing their utmost skill and science to the hateful task of mutual murder; at night I was witness of the "tragedy" of a dog's death. I had made my way past several large hospitals, where the surgeons were working untiringly, to the telegraph office at Liao-Yang. There I met a young Russian, the war correspondent of the *Russ*, who had been shot right through the chest, but true to his calling was sending off his "wire" to St. Petersburg. Then, thinking the time had come to leave the city, I went to collect my worldly goods, which were in a tent in a garden inside the walls. In the same garden lived another correspondent—a German who had as pet a small Chinese puppy, of which he was very fond. He was in distress about this pet. "I can't find the *kleine hund*," said he. I helped him to search for the missing dog, but all our efforts to find it proved

futile. At last our suspicions were aroused on seeing a group of Chinese sitting round a fire over which hung a flesh-pot. Their attitude, the greedy glisten in their eyes, awoke our worst fears. We hurried up only to find our premonitions over-true—the *kleine hund* was inside the pot.

The town was comparatively quiet, the sound of the guns having almost ceased; I lay down to rest—to be once more awakened by the angry crackling of rifles.

CHAPTER XVII

JAPANESE CLOSE IN ON LIAO-YANG

DURING the night the entire outer position south of Liao-Yang had been evacuated by order of General Kuropatkin. As already told, the General wished to strengthen the force on the other side of the Tai-tze-ho operating against General Kuroki, and, with that object, had hurried over the 1st Siberian Army Corps, whilst the 3rd Siberian Army Corps was kept in reserve. No praise too lavish could be bestowed upon these men. Some idea of the character of their forty-eight hours' fighting has been given in the last two chapters, it should also be realised that during that period they had scarcely tasted food or enjoyed rest, and, after having been assured that the foe had been beaten, were suddenly ordered to retreat, to march through the darkness of night to take up a position where more hard fighting awaited them on the morrow. The men in these trying circumstances were wonderfully patient and enduring. Needless for them the exhortations, commonly addressed to the troops by their generals, to strain every nerve for the fight, "for to-day the Russians must attack and conquer." Certainly on this occasion the opinion among the

Russian officers was that Kuroki's attempt to cut their communications would fail; rather they believed that the Japanese General would find himself cut off by General Kuropatkin and forced either to surrender or to witness the annihilation of his men. The troops which had not been sent across the Tai-tze-ho now occupied the inner line of fortification carefully constructed around Liao-Yang on all sides, save that where the river came close to its walls. On either end these fortifications rested on the river, and, though built on the open plain, presented a most formidable barrier to the advance of the Japanese. In front of the redoubts and trenches the ground was honeycombed with *trous-de-loups* and covered with wire entanglements.

On what, during the two previous days' fighting, had been the Russian extreme right the enemy was closer in to the railway line and the city than in the direction of the hills, and chiefly from this side came the heavy infantry fire which awoke all Liao-Yang that morning of the 1st of September—the day when sportsmen at home are early astir after quarry of another kind. Knowing that it could not be long before the Japanese discovered that Shushan and the other hills had been abandoned to them, I listened for the sound of shells coming into Liao-Yang itself, and especially in "Russia town," the European settlement round the railway station. However, the artillery fire seemed distant, as if directed against the empty outer positions. Taking advantage of the interval afforded before the situation developed, I got my kit together,

placed it all on a cart hired for me by my good friend Colonel Potapoff, and joined the exodus across the Tai-tze-ho. Beside the railway bridge (available also for foot and horse passengers), the river was spanned higher up by two pontoons. The Tai-tze-ho was now past the season of full flood, and the pontoons afforded an easy means of crossing. All the bridges were carefully guarded. The roads were crowded—military transport of all kinds, ambulances full of wounded men, Chinese and other merchants with hastily packed goods, all sought safety beyond the river. Having seen my belongings across, I left the cart in a convenient place in charge of the driver, a Chinaman, and made my way back to Liao-Yang anxious to see what happened. The rifle fire was still very hot, but the guns were silent—the Japanese, although they had by this time occupied the hills, did not seem in a hurry to bombard the town.

The restaurant at the railway station was open and was packed with people scrambling for food. With difficulty I managed to get something to eat, and having satisfied my hunger fell to watching the motley crowd. There were officers from the firing-line whose faces had seen neither soap nor water for days, and whose canvas shirts were begrimed with mud and powder. Others there were still spick and span, bearded men in strange uniforms, hospital folk snatching a moment from their unending labours, and merchants anxious to get by train to Mukden. The keeper of the restaurant and his assistants, all Greeks, beamed with satis-

faction at the rich harvest of roubles this crowd represented. As far as the bustle and confusion permitted, the platform had been transformed into a hospital. Doctors and nurses attended to the wounded as they were brought in; the patients were then placed in the hospital trains in waiting, which one after another steamed away north. Suddenly there came a familiar but unwelcome sound—a deep boom and then the whistling of a shell as it passed over the railway station and burst a hundred paces away in "Russia town." The Japanese artillery had awoken, and its first object was to destroy the railway station! Boom —a second shot followed the first and rapidly emptied the buffet. Proprietor and waiters stood open-mouthed and aghast, for not only were the shells whistling around, but their patrons had fled without waiting to settle accounts. The latter was probably their most serious grievance. With the rest I left the buffet, and, taking my horse from the terrified man who held it, rode off to the town wall, thence to watch the fray. On my way I met a party of Greek store-keepers hastening towards the bridge. The bombardment had got on their nerves, and when a shell was heard approaching they threw themselves in panic on the ground. The shell burst twenty paces from them, and they rose uninjured. They ran on, leaving their cart behind. But to abandon property went sore against the grain, and, gradually regaining confidence, the Greeks dashed back for their cart, and having secured it continued their journey towards Mukden.

Ascending the city wall I basked in the sun whilst watching the Japanese shot fall on "Russia town." The enemy had got guns on Shushan Hill, and, from a comfortable distance of 5000 yards or so, were shelling the Russian line of communication. (The Chinese city they did their best to avoid, though during the two following days some shells did burst within the walls, causing considerable loss of life.) The infantry fight also continued, signalised by occasional bursts of rifle fire in the plain, but the high *kowliang* effectively prevented the looker-on from seeing much of either combatant.

Towards evening the Japanese began to use 6-inch guns; weapons, I believe, captured from the Russians at Kinchau in the previous May. The shells from these guns fell with a great "flump," and sent up a volume of thick black smoke on bursting. Unfortunately one 6-inch shell fell on the railway platform among the wounded men, several of whom it killed or further injured. The shot also struck two nurses, one dying of her wounds. Notwithstanding the bombardment, doctors and nurses had gone on with their duties regardless of the risk they ran, and even after this tragic interlude they continued their labour of love calmly and coolly. It did not need this example to show that women, when danger threatens, can exhibit as brave and serene a spirit as any member of the other sex, but to my mind the incident demonstrates the inadvisability of allowing women nurses to enter the danger zone. It should, of course, be understood that the Japanese were not

firing intentionally on hospital or hospital train, they were only doing what they were in duty bound to do—endeavouring to destroy the Russian communications. The fault lies perhaps in the Russians turning a railway platform into a hospital station. Nevertheless, in the last resort, wounded men cannot be allowed to interfere with military exigencies; a hard saying, illustrated by an order issued this day by the Russians, namely, that no man should leave the ranks to help a wounded comrade. The wounded too sorely hit to go alone to the dressing stations were to lie where they fell. Part of the reason for this order is to be found in the inclination of some of the fighting-line men (stretcher-bearers not being always available for the purpose) to make a very long job of helping a wounded man—they themselves being out of danger whilst the job lasted.

The bombardment went on till dark, and even after nightfall, with little intermission. I determined to rejoin Baron Stackelberg's Corps and see the fight with Kuroki. Leaving Liao-Yang for good, I crossed the river, but could nowhere find my cart and driver. Fortunately I had some food in my wallet, otherwise I must have gone supperless to bed. "Bed" was provided by the river bank. The night was far from still. The boom of the guns continued, and bursting shell illuminated the heavens. Trains rumbled across the bridge and away to the north, cart after cart filled with stores rattled by. So many noises made sleep almost impossible, and one longed for daylight again.

CHAPTER XVIII

GENERAL KUROKI PROVES VICTORIOUS

EARLY the next morning (September 2nd) General Kuropatkin and his Staff crossed the railway bridge at Liao-Yang and rode out eastward to the hills where the 10th and 17th European Army Corps were posted to oppose General Kuroki. The Japanese were now attempting to capture Liao-Yang by direct attack, and at the same time to cut the communications between Kuropatkin and Mukden. Success in the second undertaking would render the fall of the city certain; should Kuroki's effort fail, however, the Russian Commander would be able to hurl his whole force against the foe outside Liao-Yang, with consequences probably disastrous to the Japanese.

The utmost importance attached, therefore, to the operations north of the river. The field of battle on this side extended parallel to the railway as far as Yentai Station (14 miles in a direct line), and thence eastward to the Yentai coal mines. The Russian force faced east with its back to the railway. Between the line and the hills which rose eastward was a plain three or four miles wide covered with tall *kowliang*, now ripe for harvest.

The nearest hills were held by the Russians; beyond, threatening the whole front, was the army of General Kuroki.

General Kuropatkin had ordered the 1st Siberian Army Corps (Stackelberg's) to march to Yentai, which became the extreme left of the Russian position. It was surely asking too much of these brave fellows, after their two days of incessant fighting south of Liao-Yang and the night march across the Tai-tze-ho, to make another tiring march —and under a blazing sun—at the end of which they were expected to meet and beat the enemy. The task entrusted to General Stackelberg was to attack Kuroki's right flank, while the European Army Corps attacked the left flank, the combined movement being intended to cut off the Japanese from the Bensihu ford of the Tai-tze-ho, and thereafter to fall upon Kuroki and defeat him in detail. The idea was a sound one, and perfectly feasible in favourable conditions. The reason why it failed will be apparent when the end of this chapter is reached. It was with Stackelberg's Corps, as the reader remembers, that I had been on Shushan Hill, and I now wished to rejoin it. This proving impracticable, I determined to keep nearer the river, as by that means I could not only watch the fight between the 10th and 17th Army Corps and Kuroki's left, but also get some idea of how the battle round the city was progressing. The shelling of the Russian positions outside Liao-Yang had gone on intermittently all night, at dawn the attack was renewed with full vigour. From the railway bridge

I watched for a while the conflict. The Japanese infantry in the plain were pouring a hot fire on the trenches; the field artillery kept up an incessant roar, while above the tumult could be distinguished the deep boom of the 6-inch guns. Turning from the bridge I mounted my horse and followed the direction taken by General Kuropatkin, intending to join the 17th Army Corps. To reach the hill they held it was necessary to cross the *kowliang*-covered plain mentioned. It was a distance of some four miles; the millet stood three or four feet above the head of a man on horseback, and the whole plain was covered with a network of small paths, and dotted with villages all of one pattern. To find one's way in such conditions was a task of the utmost difficulty—a fact which later in the day was to have an important bearing on the result of the battle. At length I gained a village on rising ground round which a brisk fire was being maintained. On the right were the hills overlooking the Tai-tze-ho, occupied by the 10th and 17th Army Corps. A little in advance of these hills were two mamelons. These mamelons were the scene of the opening phase of the battle of Yentai. General Kuroki having crossed the Tai-tze-ho in the afternoon of the 31st of August, had spent the 1st of September in making secure his positions, and, this done, at dawn on the 2nd his troops attacked and captured the two mamelons. Just before I reached the scene the Russians had recaptured the positions, and were then holding them, in face of a very severe artillery fire.

Standing about 800 yards in the rear of the mamelons, I could see admirably everything that went on, and in especial the effect of the Japanese fire. On the mamelon just above me two battalions were posted. One battalion had been able to throw up cover sufficient to protect it from the shell fire, but the other occupied rocky ground, and the efforts of the men to get shelter proved vain. All the while the Japanese shells were bursting over them. The guns had got the range perfectly, and the battalion suffered terribly. No troops could stand such punishment long, and, unable to endure it, the battalion began to retire up the hill on their main body. To reach the cover they so sorely needed the men had to climb some 1000 yards in the open. It was not crossing a fire zone merely, but a death zone. The moment the Russians rose from the mamelon, the Japanese gunners (some three batteries) opened a terrific fire upon them, and followed them with shrapnel the whole way. As an exhibition of scientific slaughter the firing was lacking in nothing. The range of the guns was exact, the shooting perfect. The shrapnel burst over the heads of the retreating troops, as it were in large patterns. There was no cover, no escape for the unhappy Russians. Under this awful hail of bullets the men dropped like wheat beneath the sickle of the reaper. Death most truly was gathering a rich harvest. All the way up the slope was carpeted with little dark forms—few indeed of the battalion gained cover in safety.

Incidents like these bring home with terrible

reality the frightful curse of war, but in the battle it was simply what I have called it—an incident. The Japanese fire continued all the morning, and to it the Russians replied from batteries placed in the *kowliang*. These, firing at a considerable range and over the mamelons, tried to silence the hostile guns. The range of the Russian guns is superior to that of the Japanese by several hundred yards. But while the Russian field and horse artillery was provided with shrapnel only, the Japanese had both shrapnel and percussion shells. The enemy tried hard with percussion shells to find the whereabouts of the Russian batteries. In this they were not successful, though now and again a chance shell would burst near the Russian guns.

In the afternoon I ascended the big hill on which was the main body of the 17th Corps. The situation in our immediate front was practically unchanged. General Kuropatkin had gone back to Liao-Yang, in which direction the fight raged as fiercely—more fiercely, in fact—than before. From the commanding position of the hill some general idea of the battle could be obtained. Away to the east one could see across the Japanese positions, as far as Bensihu, 25 miles away, where Kuroki had crossed. Behind was the city, surrounded by a ring of smoke and flame; the smoke hiding from sight scenes of slaughter almost unparalleled, as Oku's men threw themselves again and again against the Russian trenches. Turning one's gaze northward towards Yentai it was obvious that the fighting in that direction, where were Stackelberg's

brave Siberians, was very severe. One could see the flashes of the guns showing clear against the dark hills. However, it was but partial attention one could give to the distant fight, so absorbing was the contest waged immediately below us and with us. The infantry on the hill were lying flat on the ground, as Japanese shells occasionally came plump among them. These shells must have been fired at a great distance and more or less haphazard. They were percussion shells, and loaded with the high explosive *shimosa*, which is of the same character as lyddite and melinite, but more combustible than either the British or French explosive. The shells on bursting give off a suffocating black smoke, and split into many small fragments, which cause ugly wounds.

Towards evening the Russians got together nearly two hundred guns, and, massing the batteries in threes (*i.e.* 24 guns), endeavoured by an overwhelming cannonade to demoralise the enemy. All the guns began firing at the same moment, covering the Japanese position in a canopy of white smoke from the bursting shrapnel. A more magnificent spectacle than this display of artillery I have never seen. The position here was that of the Japanese bombardment of the outer position at Liao-Yang reversed—only with more of artistic effect. (I am writing of it now simply as a spectacle, which those on the Russian side could regard at ease and in comparative safety.) The guns were ranged in a long line and fired sometimes together, sometimes in sequence. Three massed batteries fired a salvo,

and as the shells rushed through the riven air, with the sound as of a great screw being turned, the next in the line of threes thundered forth, and all down the line the other batteries took up the tale. Then again the massed batteries at the right of the line bellowed and belched, and all the others followed in order. Words entirely fail to depict the scene; some faint idea of the intensity of the fire may be gathered from the fact that the Japanese guns did not attempt to reply. Not a single gun broke the silence from that side, indeed it seemed impossible that anything could live within the range of the Russian artillery. It was not that the Japanese, who are quick at finding out a range, could not locate the hostile batteries, but that under such a tempest of lead no gun could be worked. The Japanese gunners on this occasion did, probably, what they generally did when subjected to a fire such as this—left their guns and sought cover to right or left some distance away. These tactics can only be adopted when the guns temporarily deserted are in a safe position, as they were on this occasion. The bombardment while it lasted was as severe as that by the Japanese on the Siberians on the 30th and 31st of August. There the guns were not left, and the havoc wrought was terrible. Combining the double experience, the concentrated fire of Oku's batteries on Shushan and this of the Russians on Kuroki, it might almost be said that no greater display of the power of artillery is possible. Doubts as to the value of artillery have been expressed by officers who went

through the Boer War; after Liao-Yang there is no room for doubt either as to its moral or material effect.

The bombardment of the Japanese position continued till darkness set in. Just before the sun went down large reinforcements marched in from Liao-Yang, the men singing and bands playing. It was a little theatrical effect, meant to inspire the corps who had been fighting all day with fresh courage. It was also designed, perhaps, to obscure the fact that the Russian plans had all miscarried. Though in numbers greatly superior to the Japanese, the 10th and 17th Army Corps had barely succeeded in holding their own, and towards Yentai defeat had overtaken the Russians. Notwithstanding that in the morning the position of the Japanese had been a most precarious one, the attempt to cut off General Kuroki had ended in dismal failure. The reasons for this result may well be combined with an account of the day's fighting north of the position in which I had been stationed.

We have seen that apart from their artillery "show off" the 10th and 17th Army Corps had remained practically supine. This was due to the lack of any controlling mind. On the hill on which I was, there were towards evening, in addition to General Bilderling, three or four commanders of corps, but each refused the responsibility of commanding the whole of the troops, and no orders came from General Kuropatkin as to what should be done. Nothing therefore was done, and in this fashion the Russian chances of success on the right flank were

thrown away. For the left flank the day had been most trying. The 1st Siberian Army Corps, after its long march under a hot sun, came into action about half-past three in the afternoon, when they were fiercely shelled by the enemy and thrown into considerable confusion. The gallant heroes of the Liao-Yang fight rallied later on, and at half-past six attacked the Japanese right wing, but were driven back with heavy loss. The coal mines at Yentai fell into the hands of the Japanese, who pressed on almost to Yentai Station on the main line. They were, however, prevented from taking it by the Siberians, who at the close of the day still protected the railway.

But the worst feature of the battle for the Russians was the dispersal of the force commanded by Major-General Orloff. This force (8000 to 10,000 strong), consisting of a division of the 5th Siberian Army Corps and one regiment, had been lent to General Stackelberg, to whom it would have been invaluable. It was composed of troops newly arrived from Siberia and mostly reservists. Sent down from Mukden for the purpose of helping Baron Stackelberg, General Orloff was, however, more anxious to help the 17th Corps, and on his own responsibility marched off in the direction of that body. His division lost its way in the tall *kowliang* which, as already noted, covered the plain. Various regiments got separated, mistook each other for enemies, and attacked one another. The whole of Orloff's force was thus thrown into confusion. All chance of its recovering

cohesion vanished when the Japanese (who had been watching the fratricidal strife from the neighbouring hills) swept down and poured volley after volley into the unhappy Russians. A panic at once ensued, all organization was broken up, and a great part of the division annihilated. General Orloff himself escaped with a slight wound. The disaster was afterwards attributed in part to the non-delivery of a message sent by Orloff to the 17th Corps; the messenger (it was said), trusting to a bad map, lost his way, while no duplicate message had been sent. The bald facts herein set forth tell their own tale, and render it needless to seek excuses for the disaster.

It has been pointed out that under proper conditions the Russian plan for cutting off Kuroki should have succeeded, and Kuropatkin's staff officers certainly believed that it would succeed. They did not consider the condition of mind of the men. Had they done so they might have realised that the 1st Siberian Corps at least went into action that day a beaten force. How else could it be? After being assured that "the Japanese were crushed" they had been suddenly ordered to retire, had been marched about incessantly and given no time for proper meals or for sleep. The reader may perhaps think I labour this point overmuch, but it is of the essence of the case. From the moment the Siberians were withdrawn from the outer positions at Liao-Yang they concluded that the enemy had won, and fought on September 2nd with that impression still strong upon them. Unfortunately

the action, or inaction, of the staff and the commanders of other corps all helped to make this impression come true. The want of a man with resolution enough to take command on the Russian right led to impotence in that direction; Orloff's action stands self-condemned; add to all these causes a great want of care in sending orders and the absence of maps (these were unprovided because the Russian plans did not contemplate the possibility of the Japanese getting north of Liao-Yang!), and sufficient reason has been shown why the Russians, though in superior numbers to their enemy and holding quite as strong a position, gave way before them. If we turn to consider for a moment the other side, we cannot but marvel at the extraordinary activity and inexhaustible energy of the Japanese. Night and day, since the 27th of August, they had given the Russians no rest. They displayed no great inventive genius, perhaps, but, finding the results satisfactory, they carried out the precepts of the military text-books to the letter. Had they been in greater numbers they would have achieved greater success, but what they did accomplish was sufficiently remarkable.

As the battle died down with the dying day we learned that on the Liao-Yang side the successive attacks on the Russian positions had all failed. General Kuropatkin still made the town his headquarters. The chance of defeating the Japanese had gone, but the Russian position was not hopeless. I did not return to the town, but found quarters in the village not far from the hills. About

midnight I was awakened by the sound of heavy infantry fire in the *kowliang* near the mamelons. The Japanese, I supposed, were indulging in a favourite pastime, that of creeping up through the tall millet during the night, close to the Russians, who were ill at ease beneath its cover. On such occasions the Russians were usually driven back. The firing continued intermittently throughout the night, and I was early astir in the morning, when the main battle was renewed.

CHAPTER XIX

GENERAL KUROPATKIN ABANDONS LIAO-YANG

It was now (September 3rd) the fifth day since the great Japanese attack on Liao-Yang had begun. The previous day had been really decisive of the issue, and the task left to the Russians was reduced, practically, to warding off the attack of General Kuroki whilst opportunity was given for the evacuation of Liao-Yang, to be followed by a general retreat to Mukden. It was not without a final effort to win the battle that General Kuropatkin was compelled to accept this view of the situation, for the firing I had heard during the night was caused by a night attack on Kuroki's left by the 10th and 17th Corps. The attack failed, as was inevitable. The only matter for surprise is that it should have been made. The men had had a most trying day. They had been kept almost entirely on the defensive, had suffered severely from artillery fire, and were tired out. To expect such men at the end of such a day to turn the Japanese, elated with victory, out of their positions, was unwarrantable. When daylight came the fight was fierce near the village in which I was, and the Japanese were evidently attacking. Soon

afterwards Major-General Kastalinsky and a body of men passed through to reinforce the troops in action. They had not gone more than 600 yards when they were assailed by a hail of shrapnel and forced to retrace their steps. Shortly afterwards a force of Cossacks went by. It was extremely difficult, without getting on the hills, to find out how the fight progressed. All one could tell was that the Russians still kept possession of the roads leading north.

The childlike curiosity of the Chinese in the village received an amusing illustration. The owners of the house in which I had slept thought they would like to have a "look-see" at what was going on, so they climbed to the roof. I tried to explain that by doing so they were likely to attract the attention of the Japanese gunners, to their own manifest danger, but they failed to understand me. For a while they perched on the roof in contentment, till a shell whizzed by rather near, when they tumbled down helter-skelter, quite satisfied that they had seen enough. A shrapnel shell is an efficient educator!

Soon the Russian wounded in the night attack began to come through the village. It was a ghastly procession. The hospital organisation had broken down, and these men were in most pitiable condition. There were no stretchers, no ambulances, no dressing-station near, nor anyone in the village who knew where to direct the men to get aid. All were covered with mud, and many with blood. They had put rough bandages round their

wounds, but stood sorely in need of proper treatment. Some could walk fairly well, others were only able to crawl, and some too weak to stand were carried by their comrades on bits of canvas fixed on poles or rifles. The blazing sun added to their sufferings. The less badly hit surrounded the wells, clamouring for water. A Russian correspondent and I did what we could for the poor fellows, and the brandy we had was given to the worst sufferers. The case of these men was very hard, but that of other of the wounded was worse. Hundreds of casualties occurred in the thick *kowliang*, and the stricken men lay hid in it undiscovered by their comrades, and unable to move. In a retreat there was no time to search the fields, and these men left behind had a lingering and terrible death. That there were many such cases is, I fear, unhappily true.

Having passed the morning in the village, I started about midday for Yentai Railway Station, which I reached after some misadventures in the *kowliang*. It was already obvious that the retreat of the army had begun. Hospital trains bearing wounded from Liao-Yang were going north; the roads round the station were filled with troops and transport. I entered the station hoping to find the restaurant open, but in this was disappointed. However, I met a Russian doctor of my acquaintance, and he invited me to have a cup of tea and a slice of black bread in his hospital, which was the station waiting-room. I thankfully accepted his hospitality, and accompanied him to the room, in

which were many wounded men. One of the nurses spoke English, and told me she had lived in England a considerable time. Near us, as we sat talking, lay a poor artillerist with a big piece of shell in his stomach. His life was fast ebbing away. The doctor asked him if he had a fancy for anything, and at his request a bottle of beer was brought, but he was unable to drink the contents. An officer, noting his condition, inquired if he would like to send a last message home, and one was written to his wife at his dictation. A minute or two afterwards he died. His was a more fortunate lot than that of most of those who died for the Tsar in Manchuria. As a rule, the death of husband or son is unknown to the waiting wife or mother till the regiment finally comes home. Then mayhap a comrade tells of "the unreturning brave," how Ivan Ivanoff died in such and such a battle, and how Alexis Petrovitch fell in a night attack. That is all; no casualty lists are published, consequently there are no anxious crowds besieging officials for news of their dear ones. The men have fallen. Let the dead bury the dead.

One object I had in coming to Yentai was to send news of the battle to England, and I got a telegram passed by the censor, who happened to be at the station. As on a previous occasion, the telegraph officials refused to forward it—no doubt the wire was busy with messages from Kuropatkin and Alexeieff; but one of my colleagues was going to Mukden and promised to send my message from that town. This left me free to

watch the operations in the neighbourhood of Yentai. Part of the 1st Siberian Corps had moved farther north along the railway line. They formed the extreme left wing of the army. A few miles east, in the direction of the coal mines, Baron Stackelberg with a considerable force was still opposing Kuroki's right. It was all important that railway and roads leading to Mukden should remain in Russian hands, and some batteries shelled the Japanese positions, which, it was rumoured, were to be assaulted. The assault, it is almost unnecessary to state, was not made. However, the Russian movements went on with comparatively little interference from the enemy. The Japanese (who were not nearly so numerous as the Russians supposed) were doubtless obliged to take some rest. So that this day the fury of Kuroki's attack somewhat abated. On the right wing of the Russian force the 3rd Siberian Corps —one of the corps which had so gallantly held the outer fortifications at Liao-Yang—replaced the 17th Corps, which took the road for Mukden. The 3rd Siberians had had on the 1st and 2nd of September a respite from fighting, and were therefore fresher than their comrades of the 1st Siberian Corps, whose trials I have already enlarged upon. The position they—the 3rd Siberians—now took up was one of great danger, their duty being to protect the flank of the retreating army.

That night I and a colleague slept in a village near Yentai Station. Impelled by the pangs of hunger we ate all our provisions—a rather serious

thing, as we found in the morning, when there was no food to be bought nor black bread or tea to be begged from my friend the doctor, for doctor and hospital had moved north. We learnt that a great deal of transport and many regiments had gone along the road towards Mukden during the night, and presently news came that Liao-Yang had been abandoned. The great army which six days previously was confident of delivering a smashing blow on the Japanese was now in full retreat before those same foes. Not, however, the whole of the army—for there were many mounds of newly turned graves and many a corpse which remained unburied. The Russians had lost thousands of their bravest in those days of blood.

Liao-Yang was evacuated early in the morning (September 4th), and the same day Tokio received with rejoicing Marshal Oyama's despatch announcing his triumphant entry into the city. Both the defence of and the attack upon the inner position round Liao-Yang had been most determined. Of the utter recklessness which the troops of Generals Oku and Nodzu showed in attacking I have already spoken. I saw little of this part of the far-flung fighting line, but eye-witnesses assure me that it is impossible to exaggerate the utter disregard of death exhibited by the Japanese. They perished in thousands under rifle fire while clearing the *trous-de-loups* and wire entanglements and in attacking the trenches. The Japanese commanders acted as if the whole burden of the

battle was on them, and that victory would be lost if the defenders were not hurled across the Tai-tze-ho. The Japanese got their chance of mauling the Russians when the latter commenced the evacuation. Once more troops who had successfully held their own were called upon to give way. It was none, the less disheartening because inevitable, and it affected the *morale* of the troops, to whom it must have seemed that they were struggling against an irresistible fate.

As soon as the evacuation began, the Japanese guns opened fire on the Russians, who had for line of retreat only the railway bridge and the two pontoons across the Tai-tze-ho. Nevertheless the retirement was carried out with great coolness, and the loss sustained in crossing the river was comparatively small in view of the difficult position from which the Russians had to extricate themselves. All the artillery was got away. But if the evacuation of Liao-Yang was cleverly effected the army of Kuropatkin was still in great danger, and the Commander-in-Chief seemed really afraid that a large part of his force would be cut off. It was a reasonable apprehension, for General Kuroki's army began the day with renewed vigour, and drove back the 3rd Siberian Corps, who only just managed to keep the line of communication open. In view of the gravity of the situation, the corps and transport north of Yentai received orders to march on Mukden at once—they at least could be saved.

In melancholy frame of mind the whole army

marched northward, with Kuroki continually pressing its flank and the fear that Oku would ere long be on its heels. On the right of Yentai artillery fire continued, and I rode out and watched the shells bursting. The fight was indecisive, or rather the Russians fulfilled their object, for evening came and the Japanese had failed to capture Yentai Station or to bar the line of retreat.

A forage on my part for food had resulted in getting nothing save a bottle of green Chartreuse; and with a ration of this liqueur I had to be content for supper. After all it was better than nothing. The night proved rainy, and I sought shelter in a deserted house—from several of the villages round which the fight had raged the inhabitants had fled. The smell of the dye in the manufacture of the cotton clothes so dear to the Chinese heart was, however, so strong that I was driven from the house. Having seen that my pony and saddle were safe, I built for myself a wigwam of *kowliang*, into which I crawled. Alas, my architectural skill was at fault—the wigwam was not water-tight! Perhaps it mattered the less, for I was again disturbed by heavy rifle fire, the Japanese making another night attack. The position was full of awkward possibilities. Though I saddled my pony I dared not leave the shelter of the wall surrounding the house in which I had stabled the horse, for to do so was to make myself a target for the Russian troops in the village, who would most likely have taken me for an enemy. When daylight at length arrived I set out to

get food for man and beast, and fortunately met one of my Liao-Yang friends, Colonel Panoff of General Kosagovsky's staff. The Colonel had tinned provisions, and gave me an excellent breakfast, of which, after a supper of Chartreuse *seul*, I stood in some need. Whilst we sat smoking, an orderly rode up to say that Yentai had been evacuated and that the rear-guard was moving off. It was clearly time to be gone, so I saddled up and turned the pony's head towards Mukden.

All day and all night of the 4th of September the retreat from Liao-Yang had been going on, and by this morning, the 5th of September, the Russian troops had been brought as far north as Yentai. General Kuropatkin had strong parties of cavalry and infantry protecting either flank, while the 17th Army Corps was acting as rear-guard. Though harassing the flanks, the pursuing troops were still some way behind the rear of the Russian army. The situation was for all that full of danger, the retreat being hampered by the execrable state of the roads. (The railway was employed in removing the wounded and heavy guns, the troops and regimental transport had to go by road.) The retreat was conducted along two main roads, one that ran alongside the railway and the Great Mandarin Road farther east. Throughout the whole distance from Yentai to Mukden both roads were packed with men and carts. The transport drivers were exhausted with their labour, and in a condition of nervous dread; the troops were in little better

case. Shortly after Yentai was left behind, Kuroki's guns began firing on the Russian right flank, but the shells fell several hundred yards short of the road. The sound of the shells—the whiz through the air, the sharp explosion following—terrified the drivers, who in panic and confusion began whipping up their horses. If the Japanese shells had come a little farther and fallen on the road, there would without doubt have been a *débacle*. As it was, the protecting force suffered heavily, and the 1st Regiment East Siberian Rifles, attacked by the enemy with infantry fire and machine guns, lost 400 men whilst holding a railway siding. It seemed to me that there was still a chance of the Russians being cut off, and not wishing to fall into the Japanese lines I rode on somewhat rapidly. I passed the 1st Siberian Army Corps on the way, Baron Stackelberg riding among his men and encouraging them to persevere. I was struck by the scanty number of dead horses along the road—in fact, considering the great strain put upon them, most of the horses looked well favoured.

No day is without its humorous incident; that of to-day was provided by the officer told off to keep up communications between the 1st Siberians and the 17th Corps. He scales about 22 stone, and, mounted on a stout nag, he went backwards and forwards, lolling in his saddle and presenting a ludicrous appearance. Despite everyone's fatigue, his was the only case of lolling I saw on that march. Another thing which arrested attention

was the admirable service of the Field Soup-Kitchens, without whose help the men would not have been able to get on, for most truly an army marches on its stomach.[1]

Travelling much more quickly than the troops, I was at last rewarded with the sight of the towers which at each point of the compass stand sentinels round Mukden. I crossed the Hun-ho and rode into the city and to the little house which, with several colleagues, I had rented. After many days of toil and stress I was glad to get a good dinner and a peaceful night.

[1] In the Manchurian army, travelling soup-kitchens were attached one to each company or battery. Their capacity was from 51 to 82 gallons, according to model, and they required fuel to the amount of 27 kilogrammes of wood to attain their highest capacity. The soup was cooked on the march, about two and a half hours being taken from the time of lighting fires to the distribution of the soup. Each kitchen has two men to look after it, one being detailed to drive and engineer the concern, whilst the duty of the other included keeping a sharp lookout for gardens on the route whence fresh vegetables could be begged, bought, borrowed, or stolen! Meat rations were provided, and the resultant soup was strong and nourishing.

CHAPTER XX

RETREAT TO THE HUN-HO—LIAO-YANG REVIEWED

EARLY the next morning (September 6th) I rode back along the road to Yentai. Part of the army had already crossed the Hun-ho, a tributary of the Liao-ho which passes about a mile south of Mukden; but the bulk of it was still south of that stream, the rearguard being perhaps ten miles off. A detachment of cavalry under Major-General Samsonoff was in touch with the Japanese, and between 5.0 and 6.0 a.m. firing was heard. After this the enemy was quiet and gave up the pursuit. This was, without doubt, due to physical exhaustion. The troops of the Mikado had had a test of endurance even greater than that imposed on the Russians, and now perforce they were obliged to let their prey escape. General Kuropatkin had been out-generalled and out-fought; but, favoured by fortune as fully as by his own dispositions, he had brought his army away to a place of temporary safety.

The Japanese might well be content with what they had achieved; for the first time in history an Oriental army had routed a great European force equipped with every device of destructive science.

It was now possible to watch the retreating troops with a degree of detachment hitherto impossible, with no fear of a Japanese shell interrupting one's observation, or the disturbing thought of having neither food nor shelter. There was little of comfort in the sight of that army trudging wearily onward, knee high in mud, travel-stained and spiritless. One could mark now the sad gaps in many a regiment; some companies barely numbered fifty men, and had lost all their officers. Guns stuck in the mud and were extricated with difficulty; men threw away part of their heavy kit, and frequent halts were necessary. In contrast to the example of Baron Stackelberg and some other commanders who shared the fatigues and privations of their men, was that of several senior officers who made the retreat in comfortable barouches surrounded by a large staff and escort. This mode of travel was too often indulged in by officers in high position in critical periods of the campaign. Their numerous carriages and escorts were always given precedence, thus hampering the progress of both troops and transport. On the moral effect of this method of commanding troops it is unnecessary to enlarge; the soldiers, had they been acquainted with the subtle humour of Mr. W. S. Gilbert, might have thought of the Duke of Plaza-Toro, who

> ". . . Led his regiment from behind
> (He found it less exciting).
> But when away his regiment ran,
> His place was at the fore, O!"

Not that these officers lacked courage, but they loved ease.

The troops passed the Hun-ho by a wooden trestle bridge, which, despite appearances, stood the strain. All day long the march continued, and it was not until the following day that the weary tramp ceased, by which time trenches were being dug along the northern bank of the river, and a new defensive position planned. For a time there had been question of an immediate retreat to Tieling, and a great part of the transport was actually sent thither. For political rather than military reasons it was, however, decided not to move the army farther north. The Viceroy Alexeieff, who had betaken himself to Kharbin, probably insisted on General Kuropatkin remaining at Mukden. As the capital of Manchuria, and the ancestral home of the reigning dynasty in China, its continued occupation was judged essential for maintaining the prestige of Russia at Peking. To give it up would be virtually to confess failure in the eyes of the millions of China; by still holding it they could "save-face," and explain Liao-Yang away. So at Mukden the Russian army rested, though the position was not considered a strong one. The construction of fortifications and trenches was rendered difficult by a scarcity of entrenching tools; many tools had been lost or thrown away during the retreat.

During the series of battles round Liao-Yang and the subsequent retreat, it had not been possible to get tidings from every part of the field; as the

army settled down at Mukden, it was possible to piece together the various incidents and gain a clearer idea of the operations as a whole. The reader has had already the advantage of information only obtained by me at Mukden, and no essential picture of the great battle—as seen from the side of the defence—has been omitted. But advantage may be taken of the pause, whilst the troops are trench-digging along the Hun-ho, to add some further details and set down some general impressions.

In the seven days' fighting (August 30th to September 5th) the Russians had lost in killed and wounded over 20,000 men, and a few score taken prisoners. Definite figures are practically impossible to obtain; the Russians are at the same time indifferent as to their losses and reticent as to making them known, but the number quoted is within the mark. One particular illustration may be given. Major-General Kondratovitch, commanding the 9th Division of the 1st Siberian Army Corps, at the end of the fighting had only 93 officers left in the division, which consisted of 12 battalions and 4 batteries. Considering the nature of the fighting the percentage of casualties in the army as a whole was not high. The Japanese must also have suffered very severely; the sacrifice of life in the attacks on the inner position at Liao-Yang was awful. The fighting there had been so terrible that it drove several officers and men mad. They lay in hospital now at Mukden completely demented, recalling in their ravings the scenes of horror in

the inferno of the trenches. Although the wounded were many, the sick were few, a tribute to the healthiness of campaign life. The 1st Siberian Corps, for instance, with whose hardships the reader is familiar, had only 400 sick, a small number when the conditions in which they had fought and marched are considered.

One thing which the fight had clearly demonstrated was the ignorance of the Russian Staff of the topography of the country north of Liao-Yang. If good maps exist, they were not consulted. That used was on the scale of 4 versts (2.65 miles) to an inch, which was at least four times too small. On these maps few of the villages were marked, and the natural consequence was endless and needless marching and counter-marching of the troops throughout the critical days of 1st to 3rd September. A regiment would march to one village, to be told that they had come to the wrong place, would then be marched off somewhere else, only to find themselves marched back again. With the mud and the sun to help in exhausting them, this was no proper preparation for fighting the enemy. The reason why only these bad maps were available was owing to the belief, already indicated, of the Russians that the Japanese would never cross the Tai-tze-ho. Why then bother about maps? Connected with the bad mapping was the defective supply. Unless with a railway line at their backs the Russians proved unable to run either transport or supplies smoothly. They constantly got into great difficulties. Considering the lack of organ-

isation (and the bad roads), it was more by hit than wit that the transport came safely through from Liaò-Yang.[1] Rumour had it that two baggage columns had been lost, but this report proved untrue. In this case the rumour was more credible than the fact.

Reviewing all the incidents, one can confidently affirm that Liao-Yang was not lost through any fault of the rank and file. As Sir Redvers Buller said of the troops at Spion Kop, "the men were splendid." Excepting Major-General Orloff's 5th Division, which became panic-stricken on the 2nd of September, the infantry never lost their discipline, and never gave up a position without strenuous resistance. In most cases positions were only evacuated by superior orders. Nor was it in the fighting only that the troops showed their fine qualities, for discipline was maintained also during the retreat, even when, as in the case of the 1st Siberian Corps, they had been for thirteen days consecutively either fighting or marching.

To what then was the disaster attributable? At first the Russians had believed that they were fighting a force considerably stronger than theirs, but as papers from China and news from St. Petersburg reached Mukden it was realised that this belief was incorrect, and that the Japanese were inferior in number. Russian officers were inclined to throw a great deal of the blame on Major-General Orloff and the 5th Division, to whose

[1] A great quantity of the stores in that city had been burned when the place was evacuated.

behaviour all the ill-luck at the battle of Yentai was attributed. But most officers were ignorant of what had been General Kuropatkin's intentions at Yentai. While the opinion most widely expressed was that if Orloff had not disobeyed orders, Kuroki and his army would have been cut off and beaten, another view was that the attempted flank attack on Kuroki on the 2nd of September was merely intended to gain time for the troops in Liao-Yang to cross the Tai-tze-ho and get away north. But on the subject of the Siberian troops there was no division of feeling—it was unanimously acknowledged that the 1st and 3rd Siberian Corps had covered themselves with honour, and were fully the equals of the best regiments from Europe. Even Baron Stackelberg's enemies had to confess that, alike in defending the Shushan position and in his retreat therefrom on the night of August 31st, he had shown consummate skill.

A factor not generally taken into account in discussing Liao-Yang (an unending theme of conversation at Mukden) was that, though reliant and defiant when the battle began, the spirit of the Russian troops had been sufficiently shaken by the events which preceded it, that, when the first sign of doubt as to the issue was manifested by General Kuropatkin's change of plans, the memory of the numerous previous retreats surged up and rendered victory almost impossible. The vacillation of General Kuropatkin did the rest. This vacillation, however unwarrantable, was due, no doubt, to the erroneous information he received as to the

strength and disposition of the Japanese, who thoroughly earned their victory by their audacity, tenacity, and fortitude. On their side was no hesitation, no change of plan. They saw their goal straight before them and worked to attain it to the very utmost of their ability.

Attention has been called in a previous chapter to the demonstration of the effectiveness of artillery afforded by Liao-Yang. Never since the Franco-Prussian war have so many guns been brought into action at the same time. Indeed, this was the first campaign since 1870–71 in which *both* sides had plenty of artillery. In four days the Russians, with something over 400 guns, expended 120,000 shells; the Japanese, who fired rather more quickly than their enemies and who had fully as many guns, must have fired a considerably larger number of shells. As to the effect of this half-million shells, the Russian General Staff computed that 60 per cent. of the losses at Liao-Yang were due to artillery. Had the Japanese shrapnel burst persistently lower than it usually did, the Russian losses would have been still heavier. The fact that throughout the fighting not a single Russian battery was silenced, shows that to put out of action guns provided with proper cover is extremely difficult. Although the flash of the guns can be seen distinctly, it is gone in a moment and leaves no trail of smoke, so that to locate a battery exactly is a very hard task. It is, of course, otherwise with guns in the open; but batteries are rarely so placed when within the reach of the enemy's fire. That

there is a great future for powerful mobile artillery does not admit of question. It is, in fact, scarcely possible to attach too much importance to the use of artillery on a big scale.

It is high time that we returned to consider the condition of the erstwhile draggled-tailed army encamped around Mukden. By the 11th of September the troops had settled down in their new quarters. Thankful for the opportunity, men washed their clothes and bathed their bodies in the waters of the Hun-ho, and, once more getting proper rations, began to look life more cheerfully in the face. The recuperative power of the Russian and Siberian peasant is great; one would scarcely have recognised in the bright, even gay soldiers the weary and seemingly heart-broken troops who had plodded in from Liao-Yang. The Japanese gave scarcely a sign—they too were busy repairing waste and making good their hold on the country as far as Yentai; and the quiescence of the enemy also tended to restore confidence among Kuropatkin's men. General Kuroki was reported to be somewhere to the south-east about 20 miles away, but as usual the Japanese movements were shrouded in mystery, and, however shrewdly one might guess at what they were doing, little positive could be found out about them. On the 13th of September, a big cavalry screen was formed under General Rennenkampf, some of the Frontier Guard being also organised as cavalry. The cavalry, spreading semicircularly around the Russian position, acted as the eyes and ears of the army, and did some

good work. Reinforcements came down from Kharbin, but traffic on the line was very congested. Winter was now approaching, the nights were already cold, and the troops felt the lack of warm greatcoats. Considerable quantities of clothing had been left behind at Liao-Yang, and it was a long while before the deficiency was replaced from Russia.

The advent of the army completely transformed Mukden. It was no longer the quiet Chinese city I had known a few months previously. Now soldiers were to be seen everywhere, long lines of transport carts blocked the streets, sorely trying the temper of the Cossack orderlies, who rode to and fro between headquarters (Kuropatkin's train occupied the siding vacated by the Viceroy) and the Corps Staffs established in some of the best Chinese houses. Greeks opened stores, restaurants sprang up like mushrooms in a meadow, all was animation and noise. Soldiers chaffered with the store-keepers, officers sought for curios and furs (the fur trade is one of the staple industries of Mukden), going hither and thither in the handy rickshaw drawn by perspiring coolies. Wherever three or four officers were gathered together at some café, the topic of conversation was the same—the fortunes of the campaign past and future. Nor were they averse from discussing the faults committed by the army, or resentful of criticism. By much talking, the Russian officers reached, by successive stages, a very comforting conclusion as to Liao-Yang. First, there came the stage of excuses, such as that there

never had been any intention of holding Liao-Yang, that the retreat was "an advance northward" to cut off Kuroki, which was certain to have succeeded but for that "stupid" Orloff and his "rotten" reservists. And, anyway, it was a poor sort of Japanese success. Then came the next stage, when the officers began to question whether after all the Japanese had been successful; had not they (the Russians) beaten back Kuroki? Properly considered, Liao-Yang was a Russian victory. All that was needed, in the opinion of some enthusiasts, was an immediate advance, as the Japanese after their recent enormous losses would fall an easy prey to the prowess of Russia. Whole volumes of fiction were reeled off in the glare and glitter of the restaurants. Truly a little rest and a little vodke make a wonderful difference in one's feelings!

CHAPTER XXI

PREPARING FOR THE BATTLE

THE Russian army, as the event proved, was destined to spend about a month in the positions on the Hun-ho. The entrenchments made extended for many miles along the north bank of that river. Westward of Mukden the country was flat, a few miles eastward of the city rose the fir-clad hills surrounding the Imperial Tombs. The Japanese had their advanced position at Yentai coal mines. In the country between, the outposts of either army were stationed. Despite glorious weather and the constant coming and going of motley crowds, life in the Russian camp tended to be dull: after the recent exciting experiences there was nothing more stirring in the fighting line than occasional skirmishes between parties of Cossacks and Japanese cavalry. The 1st Siberian Army Corps took up their position at Fuling in the hills by the Tombs. The peaceful resting-place of the founders of the Manchu dynasty underwent a strange and ungracious transformation on the arrival of the soldiers. Not that the tombs were desecrated or the trees within the cemetery enclosure touched. The Chinese were naturally very sensitive on this

point, and the Manchu Viceroy at Mukden made urgent appeals to General Kuropatkin to preserve the sanctity of the graves. Moreover, representations were made from Peking to St. Petersburg on the same subject. On his part General Kuropatkin gave a solemn promise that the inviolability of the Tombs should be respected and that the trees should be uninjured. From the Russian point of view the promise was kept, and to ensure the graves from any act of vandalism a guard was placed over them. Nevertheless the amenities of the place were completely destroyed. From the crests of the hills the Russians built trenches all the way down to the banks of the Hun-ho, all trees and bushes in front of the position being cut down to give the troops a clear field of fire. The beautiful irises and the rose bushes which had gladdened our hearts a short time previously were now either eaten or trampled under foot by the transport animals, and instead of the quiet little *phanza* was all the bustle and unsightliness of a camp.

Farther east and on the left of the 1st Siberian Corps was posted the 3rd Siberian Army Corps. Their line stretched as far as Fushun, near which place are rich coal mines, whose possession was then a matter of considerable importance to the Russians, especially as the Yentai mines had been wrested from them. Fushun marked the extreme left of the Russian position. On the farther or southern side of the Hun-ho a railway was being built from Mukden to the coal mines, which were specially guarded as being beyond the protecting

line of the river. Along the centre and right of the Russian position were our friends of the other corps mentioned as present at Liao-Yang or Yentai battles, as also the 6th Siberian Army Corps.

All through September reinforcements were reaching Kuropatkin in large numbers. They were entirely composed of Siberian reservists, sent to make good the gaps caused by the desperate battles in which the corps had been engaged. Such gaps could be the more easily filled, for two reasons: the men came, as stated, from Siberia, and had therefore a less distance to traverse than if they had been drawn from Europe, and being reservists they travelled with nothing but their rifles and personal kit. Had they been parts of a new corps their progress would have been impeded by the necessity of bringing with them all their regimental transport. Special efforts were also made to hasten the arrival of fresh ammunition and provisions, whilst the warm clothing lost at Liao-Yang was replaced by other clothing sent on from Kharbin.

This great activity betokened something more than preparation to meet the next attack by the Japanese; the army had not been more than a fortnight before Mukden, when the talk of the cafés—and that of the common soldier too—began to be of an advance against the foe. Every day assertions of the coming advance were made with greater and greater conviction. It might be all "gyp," but the talk was curiously persistent. Meanwhile stirring appeals were made to the *esprit*

de corps of the men. On 21st September General Kuropatkin, from his headquarters on the railway, rode over to the camp of Baron Stackelberg at Fuling. The occasion was the consecration of colours for the Siberian Rifles, and, after the blessing of the banners by Orthodox popes, Stackelberg addressed the men. He bade them remember that their conduct was being watched by all Russia and by the foreign officers attached to the army, and, after this incentive to increased effort, the General made a telling reference to the defeat of Major-General Orloff and the 5th Division Siberian Army Corps at Yentai. He spoke of the shame of twelve Russian battalions having yielded to five Japanese battalions. Such a thing had never previously happened in the history of the Russian army. And Baron Stackelberg ended with the words, stinging like a whip, "*Die like men, not as cowards!*" A striking and impressive speech, addressed for the most part to troops of proved courage and endurance, but intended to stiffen the weak-kneed among them, and to render a second disaster like that of Orloff's impossible.

Speeches of the character of Baron Stackelberg's are often a prelude to battle, and so it seemed in this instance, for preparations were now made at the hospitals for the reception of many patients—not sick, but wounded from the next battle. Such preparation does not, curiously enough, have any depressing effect upon the soldiers—on the contrary, it rather inspirits them, for nothing so quickly dispels the *ennui* of the

camp as the scent of battle. Towards the end of September members of General Kuropatkin's Staff expressed their opinion that the advance would be ordered immediately, and they proved to be well informed. Russia, it was argued, was badly in need of a victory; she must gain one battle before the winter, otherwise the *morale* of the troops would suffer. It must be remembered that Kuropatkin's army had not, up to that time, obtained a single success, and the desire to score a point may well have been strong with the Commander-in-Chief. Certainly the excitement and enthusiasm among the men grew in proportion as they saw that an advance was coming. Everybody talked of what would be done, of reticence there was none. "We have hitherto been on the defensive," an officer would explain, leaning over one of the little tables at a favourite restaurant, "now we are going to take the offensive. The Russian soldier fights best in an attack, our troops are now seasoned, they know their enemy and do not fear him, victory must be ours." Whatever was known or guessed at as to the army's doings was public gossip, and by the Japanese spies, who were numerous in Mukden, Marshal Oyama was kept well informed of what was happening. The Japanese had ample time and warning to prepare for the coming attack.

I found it hard, nevertheless, to believe that an advance was really intended, and thought that the authorities might simply be engaged in a great game of bluff. It was most unusual for the

Russians to speak openly of what they meant to do. However, when on 2nd October General Kuropatkin's address to the army appeared, it was no longer possible to doubt that the hazardous step of attacking the foe was to be undertaken. That address, the real authorship of which is one of the unsolved mysteries of the campaign, contained the following remarkable passages :—

> "More than seven months ago, the enemy treacherously fell upon us at Port Arthur, before war had been declared. The enemy . . . in his arrogance continues to dream of complete victory. The troops of the Manchurian army, in unvarying good spirits, have hitherto not been numerically strong enough to defeat the Japanese army. . . . It is for this reason that in spite of the repeated repulse of the attacks upon our positions at Ta-shi-chao, Lan-san-jan, and Liao-Yang, I did not consider the time to have arrived to take advantage of our successes to begin a forward movement, and therefore gave the order to retreat. You withdrew under most difficult conditions. . . . Attacked by General Kuroki's army you marched through almost impassable mud, fighting throughout the day and extricating the guns and carts with your hands at night, and returned to Mukden without abandoning a single gun, prisoner, or wounded man, and with the baggage train intact. . . . The Emperor has assigned for the conflict forces sufficient to assure us victory. . . . If the regiments already sent out prove insufficient, fresh troops will arrive, for the inflexible will of the Emperor that we should vanquish the foe will be inflexibly fulfilled. . . . Now the moment to go and meet the enemy, for which the whole army has been longing, has come, and the time has arrived for us to compel the Japanese to do our will. . . ."

There was much speculation in the camps along the Hun-ho as to whether the advance was under-

taken for purely military reasons and on General Kuropatkin's own initiative. The Viceroy has emphatically denied that the advance was made at his request or suggestion, and Admiral Alexeieff's story has not, so far as I am aware, been contradicted by General Kuropatkin. Yet at the time, at Mukden, the belief was common that Kuropatkin was playing a hand not of his own choosing. It should be stated, however, that the Commander-in-Chief did not consider the Hun-ho position good, and was desirous of getting a better line farther south. And as to the tone of the now famous proclamation, it must be remembered that reading it in Europe *after* the Sha-ho and Mukden battles is a very different thing to reading it on the eve of advance with the issue undecided. Moreover, it is quite the usual course for Russian generals to make high-flown appeals to the patriotism of their men. The sobriety of language habitual to British commanders must not be looked for among a race of soldiers both "old fashioned" and half-Oriental.

On the day following the appearance of General Kuropatkin's proclamation, I received an intimation to join the corps at Fuling, and thither I rode on the morning of the 4th, ready and eager for the fray. Baron Stackelberg, instead of one corps only, had been given the command of an army, and at the request of Colonel Waters, the British military attaché, I was allowed to join the Baron's Staff—an honour which I highly appreciated.

It may be of interest at this point—the eve of the next great movement—to give the estimate

made at the beginning of October by the Russian Intelligence Department of the strength of the opposing army. For the accuracy of this estimate I cannot vouch. Its value lies in this, that, right or wrong, it was that on which General Kuropatkin had to depend. Here is the Russian estimate of the force and disposition of their foe :—

Four divisions posted close to the railway, and not far north of Liao-Yang, but with outposts reaching almost to Yentai. Two divisions at the Yentai coal mines, and one, with considerable entrenchments, at Beaneapudze on the Sha-ho. These three divisions formed the Japanese right, and were south-east of the Russian position on the Hun-ho. Then one division was said to be west of the railway line, forming the Japanese left, and another further advanced towards the Russians at Sandepu. The outer line of the Japanese entrenchments was along the Sha-ho, a small tributary of the Tai-tze-ho, which, at a distance of 15 to 20 miles south of Mukden, flowed in an east to west direction across the railway line, thereafter turning south to join the Tai-tze-ho. In all, the Japanese were credited with nine divisions. These they divided into armies of the following strength: Kuroki's army—76 battalions, 18 squadrons of cavalry, and 276 guns. Oku's army—60 battalions, 26 squadrons, and 252 guns. Nodzu's army—44 battalions, 9 squadrons, and 120 guns. In the case of the armies of Kuroki and Oku, the guns included, besides those attached to the battalions, a separate artillery force of 108 guns, which could be used as

an independent unit and sent from one army to another at need. Altogether Marshal Oyama's army was estimated at 144,000 infantry, 6380 cavalry, and 648 guns.

Against this force the Russians could bring the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th Siberian Army Corps and the 1st, 10th, and 17th European Army Corps; a total of nine corps. A Russian corps and a Japanese division contain about the same number of men, but this is only a rough approximation, for the strength of a Russian corps might vary from 10,000 to 30,000. Taking an average of 20,000 for a corps, the force at General Kuropatkin's disposal would be 180,000. His army, however, exceeded that number; indeed, it was well over 200,000 strong. A more definite figure cannot be given, the greatest reticence being observed by the staff as to the strength of the different corps.

Baron Stackelberg's army, from its position in the Russian line known as the Eastern Army, consisted of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Siberian Army Corps, with Rennenkampf's and Samsonoff's cavalry. It was the very flower of the force at General Kuropatkin's command. Occupying a central position and acting independently was the 4th Siberian Army Corps under General Zarubaieff. On the west were the European Army Corps and the 6th Siberian Army Corps under General Bilderling. The 5th Siberian Army Corps was held in reserve. Such was the disposition of the Russian army when the advance was decided upon.

CHAPTER XXII

STACKELBERG'S ARMY ON THE MARCH

GREAT animation prevailed in the camp of Baron Stackelberg on that night of the 4th of October. No thought of the danger attending the movement to which the army was committed troubled the minds of the soldiers — nor, apparently, of the officers either; all seemed delighted by the orders for a general advance. At the mess of the head-quarters staff we drank enthusiastically to the success of the new venture, whilst an Engineer's band enlivened us with martial music. Glasses clinked, champagne flowed, toasts were exchanged. After dinner I lit my pipe and took my way through the camp. It was a beautiful autumn night, the air cool but not chilly, above us the stars shone brilliantly in a clear sky. I passed into the big fir trees which lined the upper slopes and the crest of the hill. All around, fitfully lit up by the flames from the camp fires, were seated the Siberian infantry, their evening meal ended. Many among them trolled songs—some wild and inspiriting songs of war, others with the softer note of home. Regimental bands vied with one another in playing stirring marches and popular tunes. Martial

ardour filled each breast; the men joyed in the very uncertainty of the morrow. From these sights and sounds I turned to look down the slope of the trench-lined hills to the silvery river and the plain beyond—and to the dark mysterious mountains in the distance. What awaited the Russian host in the unknown beyond? Would the tide of war turn in their favour, or was I to witness another disastrous retreat? These were unspoken questions to which there came no answer. Certainly the Russians—despite their Intelligence Officers—knew little of what the Japanese were doing. Oyama, I suspected, was probably preparing some new trap for his unwary assailants. The situation was sufficiently striking to give much food for thought. It was scarcely a month since I had seen these same men extricate themselves from a perilous position—exhausted, heart-broken, crushed. And now they were buoyant, singing and rejoicing at the prospect of another encounter with the foe who had so badly mauled them. Their *morale* was certainly excellent, and their generals must have felt a thrill of pride in having such troops to command. The foreigners in the camp—attachés and newspaper men—all felt great admiration for men who could recover so quickly from experiences such as the Siberians had passed through. This capacity of the men for rapid recovery of *morale* is one of the striking characteristics of the Russian army. To whatever cause due—a dulness of imagination, maybe, or a simple child-like nature—it is a factor to which weight must be given in

estimating the fighting capacity of the legions of the Tsar. The men may know when they are beaten, but the memory of a reverse is soon blurred, and the soldier becomes again his usual careless self.

The dawn of morning found the army ready to advance. Along the slopes overlooking the Hun-ho stood great blocks of grey-coated Siberian riflemen waiting for the order to march—looking east or looking west the eye fell on mass after mass of men. And now from their quarters the commanding officers rode down to where their battalions were stationed, and gave them the customary morning greeting, "How are you, my children?" As with one voice—deep and thunderous—the men reply in the accepted formula, "Long life and good health, Your Excellency." This little ceremony ended—it is one which appeals to the imagination—the order to march was given, and with bands playing and standards flying the great army moved forward, the 1st Siberian Army Corps on the right, the 2nd in the centre, and the 3rd on the left. It was in truth an army worth commanding, the three finest corps in all Siberia: veterans who had fought shoulder to shoulder at the Yalu, at the Mo-tien-ling, at Wa-fung-ho, at Ta-shi-chao, at Liao-Yang, and at Yentai. One's blood tingled at the sight of this host of tried warriors stepping proudly along, like hounds on the leash, with all the pomp and circumstance of war. Band, banners, priests, all helped the illusion that one had gone back a century or so, and that what we saw was a Marlborough at the head of his troops or a Napoleon at Jena. It was

all so different from the utilitarian and unspectacular ways of the British army in South Africa—or of modern armies generally. But if these Siberian troops were going to battle in the spirit of days long since dead in Western Europe, they were provided with the very latest weapons of destruction. As I rode behind Baron Stackelberg, who was seated on a white charger, I imagined that I discerned a smile of pleasure, of quiet confidence and satisfaction, on his thoughtful and deeply bronzed face.

Baron Stackelberg, the commander who had been (Orloff apart) the most severely criticised of all the corps leaders, the man whom intriguers had sought to overthrow, rode to-day at the head of the Eastern Army, the only lieutenant-general to whom such a great trust had been given. General Kuropatkin, despite all the efforts of the Baron's enemies, had recognised his sterling merit, and had chosen him to share the responsibility in the fate of the army.

At the head of their brigades and divisions rode Stackelberg's trusty lieutenants — a brave and gallant band. There was little Major-General Kondratovitch of the 9th Division, 1st Siberian Army Corps, the hero of a hundred fights in this campaign and in the Boxer Rising, always cheery, always with a kind word alike for officer and private soldier. There was the stolid figure of Major-General Krause[1] at the head of his new

[1] It should be explained that on the promotion of Baron Stackelberg to the command of the Eastern Army, his post as Chief of the 1st Siberian Army Corps was given to Lieutenant-General Gerngross, while Major-General Krause, formerly a brigade commander, was placed at the head of the 1st Division.

command, and, leading the 1st Siberian Army Corps, the tall form of the fearless Gerngross,[1] with his handsome face and red beard. In the centre was Lieutenant-General Sassulitch, who had commanded at the Yalu, leading the 2nd Siberian Army Corps. On his breast was the ribbon of St. George, won under Skobeloff in the Turkish War. Away to the east rode Lieutenant-General Ivanoff, Count Keller's successor in the command of the 3rd Siberian Army Corps. Ivanoff was an artillery officer, and had left a post in Central Asia to join the forces in Manchuria. Behind him was Major-General Daniloff, one of the heroes of the defence of the inner position at Liao-Yang, whose conspicuous gallantry had earned the coveted distinction of the St. George's Cross. Next to Daniloff was Major-General Kastalinsky, a jovial man with bright sparkling eyes. He had been wounded at the Yalu while extricating the 12th Siberian Rifles from a very warm corner. In front of us, many versts distant, were the dashing cavalry leaders Rennenkampf and Samsonoff with their Cossacks, working their way towards the Japanese position. Could any commander have wished for braver or better officers to help him in a perilous enterprise? I felt it a privilege to be allowed to accompany such men on such an errand as they had undertaken. Nor must it be forgotten that Stackelberg's troops were the élite of the whole Russian army, and the consciousness of this fact added to the satisfaction with which we marched along. In all,

[1] See footnote opposite.

Stackelberg had from 50,000 to 60,000 men under him.

Had it been possible that day to have seen, not only the Eastern Army, but the centre and right of the Russian force advancing to seek their foe, what an impressive picture it would have been—some 170,000 men in serried ranks crossing the wide plain beyond the Hun-ho; not one soldier sick or sorry, each and all with—

"Nae thought but how to kill
Twa at a blow."

General Bilderling's army went south and a little west, following somewhat the line of the railway; Stackelberg's army had taken a south-east direction, towards the Japanese right; Zarubaieff's corps, in the centre, inclined more towards the Eastern than the Western Army. It is only the movements of the army with which I was, that I can chronicle in detail. As we crossed the river valley, with its willow-tree swamps, flocks of wild geese got up and whirled about overhead, noisily protesting against this rude invasion of their special domain, and causing me considerable regret that I had no gun. We marched 21 versts (14 miles) that day, traversing the plain in the morning, and getting into hilly country in the late afternoon. For one mercy we were all duly grateful—nearly all of the terrible *kowliang* had been harvested, and it was possible to see where one was going. For all that it was, with the badly drawn and inaccurate maps supplied, a difficult matter to find the route. The plain was a criss-cross of countless small roads,

with nothing to indicate which were of most importance, and on the maps at the disposal of Major-General Baron Brinken, the chief of Stackelberg's staff, only one road would be shown. The wonder is that there was not much more useless marching and counter-marching than was actually the case. The sun had shone brightly all day; as night fell it became much colder. Headquarters halted for the night at the village of Badiavoise. Here Captain Reichman, of the 17th U.S.A. Infantry, who had served in the Philippines and had been with the Boers in South Africa, shared a house with Colonel Waters and me.

Early the next morning, while strolling up and down the road through the village, I met Baron Stackelberg, who was polite enough to ask my opinion of the army and the advance. "Have you a servant?" he then inquired; and on being told that I had none, "You must have an orderly placed at your disposal at once," he exclaimed, smiling; and he promised to speak to his Chief of Staff for me. This kindness from the Commander of a great army, to one who had no claim on his consideration, was more highly appreciated by me than even the excellent service of the orderly proved —Private Masquisovitch of the Siberian Rifles—a man who had been wounded in one of the early fights of the campaign, and who wore the St. George's Cross and Chinese War medal. That day (October 6th) the march of the army was continued, with all the full-dress parade appearance of

the previous day. The country through which we passed was very beautiful. On either side rose lofty hills, some grass clad, some clothed with the sombre fir trees; others, again, bare. Between the hills were verdant valleys watered by running streams—a land certainly worth possessing, as is all Southern Manchuria, though scarcely fertile enough to support a large army, unless careful attention be paid to the gathering of food-stuffs and the establishment of depôts.

After a short march of 15 versts (10 miles), camp was pitched early, and the men gave themselves up to feasting and to song. Who knew when the next chance for such an indulgence would come? Already the advanced guard was in contact with the enemy, and the morrow or the next day might see the army engaged. So to-night the bands played, tales were told, and songs sung, till the men were too sleepy to do aught but roll themselves in their blankets and dream of avenging Liao-Yang. As it turned out, the main body remained in their camp the two following days awaiting developments. As the Japanese positions were neared, it was necessary to act with more caution. Both morning and evening of the 7th of October gun fire was heard, and a report was spread that General Rennenkampf had got a brigade across the Tai-tze-ho (a false report; but of that we could only guess). Idling the time away, Captain Reichman and I both proved our capabilities as foragers—the captain caught a chicken, and I a small pig. That night we had a royal feast.

A little incident on the following day brought out forcibly the Russian deficiency in maps. I have already commented on their small scale and on their incompleteness. It now appeared that even of the maps they had, there were but few copies. A request was received from General Kastalinsky, who commanded the left wing of the 3rd Siberian Army Corps, for three copies of the revised edition of the map of the country.[1] The General, it appeared, hadn't a map at all! The commander of the corps, General Ivanoff, had had but eight maps supplied to him. Baron Stackelberg's headquarters were even worse off, for General Brinken and his second in command had between them only one map of the district in which the army was about to operate. Another fact which came to my knowledge helps to make clear—taken in conjunction with the scandal of the maps—why it was that though the men were of dauntless courage, and the great majority of the officers earnest and capable men, the Russians were so uniformly unsuccessful. An important army order issued that morning was not forwarded to General Kastalinsky. Hearing of it the General sent to headquarters for a copy, and finally obtained the order at half-past one in the afternoon. This method of working adopted by the headquarters staff was distinctly prejudicial to the well-being of the army.

On Sunday, the 9th of October, the forward movement of the army was resumed, a distance

[1] This revised edition had been hastily brought out, and was a slight improvement on the maps first issued.

of 14 versts being covered. The south-easterly direction had been changed for one south-westerly, and the afternoon brought us to the banks of the Sha-ho, at a spot some 15 miles N. N.-E. of the Bensihu ford of the Tai-tze-ho (the place where, as the reader will remember, General Kuroki had crossed that river during the battle of Liao-Yang). All day long our advanced guard had been heavily engaged, and the artillery fire lasted till nightfall. When we reached the Sha-ho it was to find that the Japanese had given way before our advance, and had abandoned their line of fortifications along that river. We crossed the stream by two pretty little trestle bridges obligingly left by our opponents and camped at Beaneapudze—a place with which we were destined to become painfully familiar. In our front rose rocky, rugged mountains, and against that dark background the flashes from the Russian guns could be seen. The two armies were once again in conflict. Our casualties that day were few, as were those of our enemy, though we boasted some twenty Japanese brought in prisoners. The advance guard was in permanent touch with the enemy, but another day was to elapse ere the real battle began, for on the 10th there was nothing more than heavy gun firing on our left, that is in the direction of Yentai.

Colonel Polteratski, of Baron Stackelberg's staff, Captain Reichman, and I took advantage of the opportunity afforded by the pause before the Eastern Army struck home at the Japanese, to visit the position of which we had become some-

what easy masters. This was the first chance the Russians had had during the war to view the enemy's entrenchments. The Japanese, I imagine, had scarcely completed the fortifications. The trenches and gun-pits were, however, carefully arranged. As we saw no signs of wheels we concluded that the guns had never been placed in position. The camp gave evidence of having been evacuated hurriedly, though nothing of material importance had been left behind. Matting, rice-bags, postcards, and letters were scattered about, and there were hundreds of empty cardboard cases, amply demonstrating the appreciation in which the Japanese held Murai Bros. Peacock Brand of cigarettes. Shelters of *kowliang* had been built to protect the troops during the nights, which were now quite cold. I was struck, too, by another instance of the care shown by the Japanese for the health of their men. Within what had been their line a small stream ran down a sloping bank to the level ground. To get the water the Japanese had split open the long firm stalks of the millet, and had fixed them into the hillside in such a manner as to catch the water as it came down. Passing into the millet conduits the water had a clear fall away from the earth, and could thus be collected perfectly pure and sweet. A great contrast this to the way in which the Russian soldiers invariably polluted the water in the village wells, until at length it was found necessary to station guards to regulate the water supply and keep it clean.

Baron Stackelberg received a telegram that day from General Kuropatkin, congratulating him on his successful march and on the occupation of the Beaneapudze position. The Baron had now his army in the following order: On the left, slightly forward and facing south-west, the 3rd Siberian Army Corps; in the centre, the 1st Siberian Army Corps; and close up to it on the right the 2nd Siberian Army Corps. These two corps faced due south. Zarubaieff's 4th Siberian Army Corps had converged somewhat on our right, and was also attacking in hilly country. Bilderling's army was away west in the plains.

In the Eastern Army that night all was activity. The headquarters' staff sat up till daylight getting out the orders made by Baron Stackelberg for the battle on the morrow. That this time the issue would favour Russia seemed the universal feeling —among the Russians.

CHAPTER XXIII

OPENING OF THE SHA-HO BATTLE

THE fight—the commencement of the great series of engagements known collectively as the Battle of the Sha-ho[1]—began early in the morning of the 11th of October. The task entrusted to Baron Stackelberg was to drive the Japanese from the lofty hills immediately facing the Russian lines. To accomplish this object the 3rd Siberian Army Corps endeavoured to turn the Japanese right by securing the passage of the Tai-tze-ho at Bensihu. By so doing they would threaten Liao-Yang. Meantime the 1st Siberian Army Corps made a frontal attack on the Japanese position, the 2nd Siberian Army Corps being held in reserve. The 4th Siberian Army Corps under General Zarubaieff, who were on the right of the Eastern Army but acting in conjunction with it, also made a frontal attack on the enemy. The operations could be seen perfectly from a high hill in rear of the Russian camp, and to this hill General Stackelberg rode early in the morning, directing thence the movements of his troops. The hills on which the

[1] Sha-ho means the Red River, a strikingly appropriate name for the bloody contest fought in sight of its banks.

Japanese were entrenched swelled gradually from the plain, and the lower slopes had been carefully cultivated by the Manchu farmers. Above these slopes the sides of the hills were scarred by many water-courses and their surface covered with short brown grass, affording but a precarious foothold. Towards the summit the hills became rugged and precipitous. Through them ran three passes, of which the chief and central one was the Tu-min-ling. To capture these passes, which formed the key of the Japanese position, was the immediate object of the 1st Siberian Army Corps. It was no easy task, as the position was one of great natural strength, even if held by a comparatively weak force. I could not help comparing it to that of the Boers at Vaal Krantz and Spion Kop — the formation of the hills was exactly similar.

Soon after daybreak there had been sharp fighting in front of and along the lower slopes of the hills, the Japanese being driven back to their main positions, though not before great anxiety had been caused to the Russians by the flank of the 4th East Siberian Rifles being turned. This turning movement left two batteries of the Russian guns exposed and in imminent danger of capture. Reinforcements were hurried up and the guns saved, the Russians bringing several machine guns into action. By ten minutes to seven, when, from the direction of the 4th Siberian Army Corps came the subdued roar of heavy artillery fire, the Japanese had been cleared off the lower slopes. The real

battle was now beginning. The Russian batteries massed in the plain opened a terrific fire on the enemy's trenches, under cover of which the infantry commenced to climb the slippery heights. To this bombardment the Japanese artillery replied, not, however, paying much attention to the Russian guns, but directing a severe shrapnel fire on the long lines of advancing infantry. From the spot where I was posted the 1st Siberians could be plainly observed as they crossed the foothills and began the ascent towards the trenches held by the enemy. They advanced in extended order, often slipping over the dry and treacherous grass, taking advantage of every scrap of cover afforded by mound or bush, following generally the line of a dry nullah, and ever and again halting to pour in two or three volleys at their opponents, or crouching low to avoid the bursting shrapnel. From a distance they looked like tiny specks dotted along the hill-sides, now advancing in a swift rush, now swept back by a particularly heavy fire from the Japanese above. The progress of the Siberians was very slow, but by a little before noon the attack had developed along the whole line, and an effort was being made to take all three passes by simultaneous assault. News came in that the 3rd Siberians were also heavily engaged, and a battery from the reserve was sent to their aid. The action had evidently become general, as firing could be distinctly heard all along the line towards Yentai. How the fight was going, on the extreme right, with Bilderling's troops, it was however impos-

sible to tell, and if Baron Stackelberg received reports, they were not made generally known.

All the morning the Russian guns had kept up a brisk fire on the Japanese, numbers of whom could be distinctly seen lining their positions along the upper slopes of the hills. The Russian artillery was superior to that of the enemy—both in number and weight; the Japanese, indeed, had only mountain guns, whilst General Stackelberg had his field artillery and a 6-in. howitzer battery, which, however, was not used on the 11th. The Japanese gun fire slackened as the morning wore on, and their batteries had some difficulty in locating the Russian positions. This appeared, therefore, a propitious moment for the 1st Siberians, and at 12.50 p.m. orders were sent verbally from Stackelberg to the artillery on the left to press home the attack, the infantry of the centre left wing making at the same time a bold advance in three lines. It looked as if the ebb and flow which had hitherto marked the Russian attack was to end in the surging of the Siberians right up the hills; but the Japanese batteries woke up, and, by concentrating their fire on the advancing riflemen, checked the rising tide. The batteries were, however, soon silenced by the Russian guns, which, completely out of range of the enemy, were able to pound them without interruption or danger. Helped by this heavy fire the 1st Division of the 1st Siberian Army Corps, under General Kondratovitch, made considerable progress up the hill, but lacked sufficient strength to go on, the firing line seeming to me to be too weak to

accomplish the task set it. The ground over which the advance had to be made was very rough as well as slippery, and the riflemen were encumbered with a heavy kit and handicapped by their clumsy boots, ill adapted for hill climbing. It was now past two o'clock, and nothing substantial had been gained. The battle was not going as the Russians had hoped and expected, and Baron Stackelberg was obviously dissatisfied.

However, fresh efforts were to be made, and two new Japanese batteries, which came into action shortly before three o'clock, having been silenced, a fresh regiment was sent forward on the left to aid the firing line. Advancing in face of a severe rifle fire, Kondratovitch's men succeeded in gaining the foot of the highest slopes. But at the top of the escarpment were the Japanese, as determined as ever. Try as they would, the 1st Siberians could make no further advance, though from our left flank General Ivanoff (3rd Siberian Corps) sent in word that his infantry were so close to the crest of the hills they were attacking, that his artillery had had to cease fire in order not to hit their own men. The infantry failed nevertheless to reach the top, and the same misfortune attended the 1st Siberians. They, however, maintained the position they had gained, and throughout the long afternoon made rush after rush in vain attempts to scale the heights. No wonder that Baron Stackelberg looked more and more thoughtful and displeased with the day's work. It seemed to me that a mistake was made in the manner in which the firing line was rein-

forced. All day long Baron Stackelberg told off driblets to this work, a battalion or two at a time—numbers insufficient, in my judgment, to make any effective difference, whereas what was needed was the sending forward of a really large force. No doubt the task of the Russians was one of great difficulty, but it was not impossible to accomplish had the firing line been more powerful, especially as the Japanese were not numerically strong.

Towards the end of the day further reports were received as to the progress of the battle in other parts of the field. We learnt to our disappointment, if not to our surprise, that the 4th Siberians, under General Zarubaieff, had made no headway; the hills in front of them were, as in our case, still held by the enemy. From the extreme left the news was more cheering. General Rennenkampf sent in word that his men were holding a position within fifty paces of the crest, which he hoped to capture.

Darkness did not put an end to the fighting. General Kondratovitch's men, who had got a foothold within a hundred feet of the top of the hills by the Tu-min-ling, crept up under cover of the night towards the enemy's trenches, hoping to get close enough to charge with the bayonet. The Japanese were not caught napping, and, on each occasion that an attempt was made to rush the heights, the assailants were swept back by point-blank rifle-fire.

It had been an extremely interesting fight to watch, the battlefield being set out before one like a panorama. But with darkness I gave up watch-

ing the contest, and sought shelter in the house which I shared with Colonel Waters and Captain Reichman. The night being cold we lit the fire beneath our *kang*, but with most distressing results, for the genial warmth of the fire had the effect of restoring to full activity myriads of small denizens of the matting, which rendered sleep an impossibility, and against whose attacks we had no means of coping. The Japanese, I have learned, were wiser in their generation, and every soldier carried in his kit a "ration" of insect powder.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE JAPANESE PIERCE THE RUSSIAN CENTRE

For the troops on the hills there had been no interval for rest during the night, and even if the "small deer" of the *kang* had not kept us from sleep, the firing at the trenches would have effectually aroused us. Throughout the hours of dark the firing continued, and in the early morning (October 12th) it was terrific in its intensity. The whole efforts of Kondratovitch's men were concentrated on traversing the short space—not more than 100 yards—which divided them from the enemy. If only they could close with the foe! To carry the pass at the point of the bayonet and let the rising sun greet the Imperial Eagle, that was the ambition of commander and of men; but it proved a task beyond the compass of the gallant division. The Japanese, who were probably reinforced during the night, held a superior position on the very crest of the hills, and with untiring vigilance repelled every attack, firing straight into the Russians as again and again they endeavoured to bridge the narrow gap. A few men indeed reached the Japanese lines, but only to perish. The first to do so was the chief of staff to General Kondratovitch. This

officer, sword in hand, led some men of the 9th Division up the slope. The men were swept back, all save those who lay still in death. The officer returned not. He was seen to gain the height, but no one of the Russian force witnessed his end.

At half-past six in the morning, reinforcements were sent on by Baron Stackelberg to the sorely tried firing line, with orders to do everything possible to push home the attack. At eight o'clock Baron Brinken stated that the hill directly in our front had been occupied by the Russians. One short hour sufficed, however, to show us that the report was not true; try as they could, the 1st Siberian Corps could not dislodge the Japanese from the Tu-min-ling. But with a stubbornness not to be daunted by ill-success the men held on to their task.

Meantime news had reached Stackelberg's headquarters concerning the fight of the previous day between the Japanese left and the Western Army under General Bilderling. The hoped-for success had not been obtained, and on the night of the 11th Bilderling's men were no more than holding their own. At half-past ten further and serious news was received. It came from General Zarubaieff, who with the 4th Siberian Army Corps was in the centre of the Russian lines, and who, as already stated, had had no success on the 11th. On receipt of this message Baron Stackelberg was visibly perturbed; he became restless, and anxiety was obvious in every line of his face. A few minutes of consideration and then Stackelberg

and his staff mounted and rode westward. I went in his train. Instead of the walk or slow trot at which the Baron generally marched, he put his horse to the gallop, making for a ridge of high hills on the extreme right of his army. These hills jutted into the plain towards Beaneapudze at a sharp angle from the main range, and separated the Eastern Army from the 4th Siberian Army Corps. They were in advance of the Japanese positions, but were unoccupied by the Russians. They rose abruptly and shut from our view the operations in progress beyond. Arrived at the foot of these hills we dismounted and climbed to the top of the nearest peak. On gaining the summit a wonderful sight met our eyes—wonderful, and for Stackelberg and his staff most painful. The Russian centre had been broken and beaten—driven completely back, it was in full retreat in the direction of the Sha-ho. Nor was this all, for, while the centre had been pierced, Bilderling's army far out on the plains to the west had also been forced back. The grand advance begun with such pomp and ceremony had reached a sorry end. Looking over the hills nothing could be seen for mile beyond mile but the balls of white smoke from the Japanese shrapnel as it burst over the retreating Russians. The 4th Siberian Army Corps, some nine or ten miles distant from our vantage point, were hotly pressed; and it appeared quite possible, from the rapid progress the Japanese were making, that the enemy might cut the Russian forces in two

and defeat them in detail, or press on to Mukden before Kuropatkin could get his army together again to defend it. Thoughts like these flashed through our minds as we stood gazing at the great drama being enacted in the plains.

General Stackelberg did not take long to make up his mind what to do. A battalion was ordered to occupy at once the hill on which we stood, whilst four regiments from the reserve (2nd Siberian Army Corps) were sent to attack the Japanese force pushing forward through our shattered centre. There was still the chance that these regiments, by joining hands with the 4th Siberian Army Corps, would close the gap through which otherwise the Japanese would pour. Of the difficulty of preserving the battle-line intact, some idea may be formed when it is realised that from east to west the front of the Russian forces must have stretched fully 50 miles.

Meanwhile the 1st and 3rd Siberian Army Corps were continuing their attack on the Tu-min-ling and other passes away on the east. Could the hills be carried the Japanese position would be in turn threatened, and in any case it kept part of the enemy on the defensive. All day long the battle continued, regiment after regiment of Stackelberg's reserve being drained off on a long march to the west, where Zarubaieff's men were still struggling to escape from the toils of the foe; and not long after four o'clock in the afternoon it could be seen that the 2nd Siberian Army Corps had filled part of the big gap between

ourselves and the centre. By this time nearly all the reserves of the Eastern Army seemed to have been used up, and the forces assaulting the passes were left without further reinforcements. They were still struggling to capture the positions, but were barely able to maintain the advantage gained during the night. Stackelberg must have been aware that the chance of saving the day was gone, for the order was given that the baggage of his army should be sent back along the road to Beaneapudze. This town by the Sha-ho seemed to be the objective of the entire army. By concentrating on it, the wedge which the Japanese had driven into the Russian forces would be flattened out. To convey an adequate idea of the whole battle-front is impossible, nor could its full extent be seen by one man, although from various points of vantage a very great area could be seen. While the Eastern Army was still on the offensive, the Centre and the Western Armies, though in retreat, were not in flight. Bilderling's Corps were giving way as slowly as possible; his guns replied to those of the Japanese, and the roar of cannon was continuous. It diminished, but did not cease as evening came on.

Late in the day I met Mr. Charles Hands, who had been with the 3rd Siberian Army Corps on our extreme left, and learned from him that there, as at the Tu-min-ling, the Russians had made no substantial progress. Rennenkampf had not succeeded in crossing the Tai-tze-ho, although he had secured a position overlooking Bensihu.

The casualties among the 3rd Siberian Army Corps had been heavy. Among the wounded was that fine soldier General Daniloff, of whom the reader has already heard, who commanded a division of the corps. Though severely wounded in the thigh and unable to walk, he insisted, as soon as his wounds had been dressed, on his men carrying him back to the firing line, whither he was taken on a litter, and where he remained for the rest of the day calmly giving his orders. General Daniloff had already won the St. George's Cross for his brilliant defence of Liao-Yang, and for his heroic conduct on this occasion—for the gallant fellow made an excellent recovery; he was afterwards given the *Sabre d'or*, a coveted distinction in the Russian army.

That night I spent with General Stackelberg's staff at Beaneapudze. One could now sum up the position and contrast it with that of the previous night. What a vast difference the twenty-four hours had made in most parts of the field. The position of the 1st Siberian Army Corps attacking the Tu-min-ling was unchanged, but their reserve corps, the 2nd Siberian Army Corps, had gone west to occupy the hills which jutted out so awkwardly into the plain, and the 3rd Siberian Army Corps was "no forrarder" than before. Thus the Japanese had held the three corps comprising the Eastern Army for two whole days, and the Eastern Army was the least unsuccessful of the Russian forces engaged! Elsewhere, as we have seen, the Russians were in retreat, whilst the

Japanese had pushed a wedge into the centre of their position, assailing them on their most sensitive point. The situation of Kuropatkin's vast force was critical, and Stackelberg and his staff spent a most anxious night, and only brief snatches of sleep could be obtained. Similar anxiety and activity were of course experienced by the staffs of the Centre and of the Western Army and at General Kuropatkin's headquarters. Messages were being sent and received all the night through. Until and unless the gap caused by the piercing of the Centre was closed, the danger of overwhelming disaster to the whole army was real and imminent; and although Stackelberg's Staff expressed confidence that the gap would be closed, they were manifestly depressed at the turn events had taken.

CHAPTER XXV

THE RUSSIAN ARMY IN FULL RETREAT

A NIGHT of anxiety was succeeded by another day of fierce conflict. All along the extended front the battle was resumed. Resumed is scarcely the correct word, for the fight had not ceased during the night; in fact, since the morning of the 11th the strife had gone on without a break of more than an hour or two, and then in parts of the field only. Bilderling's army had had the bulk of the fighting during the night of the 12th, but at the same time the pressure on the Russian centre was maintained.

Early in the morning of the 13th, Baron Stackelberg rode over from his headquarters to the new position which the 2nd Siberian Army Corps had taken up. The troops were busy entrenching themselves on the range of hills which ran out into the plain and which overlooked the positions held by General Zarubaieff. Several batteries had been placed in position, and so far the Japanese had made no attempt to interfere with their operations, a somewhat remarkable fact, as the possession of these hills was of considerable importance. With Stackelberg and his staff I climbed a high peak,

destined to be the scene of sharp fighting later on; it was the rugged eminence which became known as Temple Hill. The temple after which the hill was named, and from which we obtained a magnificent view of the surrounding country, contained frescoes depicting the punishments awarded the wicked in the world to come. Curious as were these mural decorations, we did not stay to gratify our æsthetic tastes by any minute inspection nor to moralise on the imaginative powers of the painter, for attention was soon riveted on the doings in the plain. Below us we could see three Japanese batteries hotly shelling the retreating Russians, while Japanese infantry was also being pushed forward, the men showing in the distance in large dark masses. The Japanese were advancing in a line parallel with the hills on which we and the 2nd Siberian Army Corps were, and to me and the other foreigners privileged to accompany the staff of the Eastern Army it seemed that here was an excellent chance of severely harassing the Japanese force attacking the Russian centre. Nothing, however, was done; we simply stood still and watched the fight. We did not even occupy the most westerly of the hills between us and Zarubaieff's men. The hills ran in a sort of double chain, with a narrow valley between, and the 2nd Siberian Army Corps had taken the line of hills nearest Beaneapudze. The opposite range was left for the enemy to seize, if he chose, and naturally he did choose. As far as could be told, the battle was continuing on this the third day in much the

same fashion as on the second: the 1st and 3rd Siberian Army Corps were still assaulting the passes; Bilderling was still in retreat, and the Japanese still had their wedge right in the Russian centre. It was two o'clock in the afternoon; the staff had left Temple Hill and were eating a hasty lunch, when news came of an attempt to drive the wedge home. A squadron of the Primorsky Dragoons galloped up to say that the enemy were even then occupying the crests of the hills opposite those held by the 2nd Siberian Army Corps, and were threatening our line of retreat. This announcement appeared to be unexpected, for it threw the staff into manifest confusion, which lasted some minutes. It was, however, no time for hesitation, and presently Baron Stackelberg ordered the 5th Siberian Rifle Division to drive the Japanese off the hills. The order was at once obeyed, the Siberians going into action at the double, the artillery thundering past at the gallop. It was an inspiriting sight, and one could but wish success to these fine fellows as they set off to redeem the advantage lost. Baron Stackelberg, seated motionless on his charger, called out words of encouragement as the troops ran past, and the men shouted back their acknowledgments in the familiar phrase, "Good health and long life, Your Excellency." The Rifles had to round the base of Temple Hill, cross the intervening plain, and scale the farther hills, on the crests of which the Japanese could now be seen hurriedly digging cover. Regaining our post of advantage, we could follow every move-

ment in the attack and defence. It was not long before the Russian batteries opened fire, and then the infantry could be made out scrambling through the tangled brushwood and over the big boulders which strewed the hillsides. The Japanese were ready for them. They had already got their guns in position, and as the Russians came on the batteries opened fire. And now Stackelberg had the mortification of witnessing a repetition of what had been going on at the Tu-min-ling for near three days. The riflemen came on in extended order, seized every opportunity to get cover, advanced by rushes, fought with conspicuous bravery, but could never gain the summit. The Japanese rifle fire was heavy and accurate, and though the Russian batteries posted below worked hard all the afternoon they failed to silence the enemy's guns or to shake their infantry. Once and again the Russians got within a hundred yards or so of the foe, but withered away under the hot fire. The failure of his force in every direction must have weighed heavily on the General, and the staff were most anxious as to the safety of the Eastern Army. Leaving Temple Hill as night began to fall, Baron Stackelberg turned his horse's head towards Beaneapudze. On the way back we saw a battery posted on a hill commanding the road, and such was the tension and uncertainty among the staff that for a considerable time no one could determine whether the guns were Russian or Japanese! In the end they proved to be Russian.

It was now evening of the third day of the

great fight, and the only matter in doubt was the extent of the Japanese victory, and whether the Eastern Army would be able to join hands with the Centre and Western Army. The attack on the Tu-min-ling had been abandoned during the day, and orders were now issued for a general retreat of Stackelberg's force. The transport had all gone back north on the road to Mukden, and the question now was whether the various corps would be able to follow, or whether the Japanese would pour in on the retreating troops. How different was the scene that night at Beaneapudze from that of four nights ago, when the staff sat up, confidently planning the attack which was to reverse Liao-Yang. Now all the planning and the scheming was how to save the army from the terrible foe. The night was spent in a Chinese pawn-shop, and such sleep as we got was obtained by lying down booted and spurred on the cold flags and with the keen air of an October night to chill the bones. We were short of food, and had to be content with a scanty ration from half-empty wallets. All night our horses remained saddled ready for emergencies. At midnight arrived Lieut.-General Gerngross, the commander of the 1st Siberian Army Corps, who had brought back his men safely from the Tu-min-ling. The 3rd Siberian Army Corps were also falling back, and urgent orders were sent out to accelerate the retirement. When morning broke on the 14th the bulk of the army had crossed the Sha-ho. The staff were still at Beaneapudze, and Baron Stackelberg was going with the rear-guard,

now the post of danger. With their faces turned northward the right and left of the army was reversed. The 1st Siberian Army Corps were in the centre, the 2nd on the left, still endeavouring to keep back the Japanese wedge which threatened to isolate us, and the 3rd Siberian Army Corps away on the right. What was the position of Zarubaieff's corps and Bilderling's army we did not know, beyond that they were still struggling back to a place of safety. As for Stackelberg's army, its retreat was conducted in orderly fashion, and the Japanese (losing a good chance as it seemed) did not seriously molest it.

With the whole Russian army now in full retreat the time had come when some account of the titanic conflict should be sent home, so at half-past ten I started for Mukden, not without some fear of falling into the hands of the Japanese, as I intended taking a short cut which led across the line of retreat of the 4th Siberian Army Corps, where the enemy's troops were most advanced. Though I escaped the attentions of the enemy, the ride was a very unpleasant one. The rain came down in torrents and drenched me to the skin. I met disorganised bands of tired soldiers, trudging wearily along the roads, all their spirit gone, and careless apparently as to what became of them. Halting in the afternoon at a Chinese farmhouse I asked for a feed for my horse, offering ample payment. But the owner of the house absolutely refused my offer. I have on two or three previous occasions given particulars of the kindness and hospitality I experienced

from the Chinese in Manchuria, but they are not all and not always celestial in their behaviour. They can be exasperating beyond words, and on this occasion this man tried my patience almost beyond endurance. His churlish refusal to give bite or sup to my poor pony wrought me to a frenzy. Mad with rage I drew my revolver, and for some seconds the Chinaman's life hung in the balance. No one was there to witness what I did, and to shoot was easy. But conscience came to my rescue, and I put my revolver away. I was at the same time determined not to be baulked, and, turning my horse into the yard, I ransacked for forage, and found all that I wanted. Taking the saddle again I continued my journey and reached Mukden late at night, after a 45 miles' ride over terrible roads. The sound of heavy firing had been continuous all day, especially from the westward where was Bilderling's army; but the state of the roads convinced me that if it rendered the Russian retirement slow, it equally hindered the pursuit of the Japanese.

I sat up all that night writing out a despatch for Reuter—with the fear of the censor before my eyes—informing that agency of the progress of this great battle, the greatest of the campaign, as far as it had gone, and, up to then, the biggest fight, probably, of which history has record.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE SHA-HO BATTLE—JAPANESE TACTICS

HAVING written a long despatch, describing the fighting I had witnessed, very early in the morning I rode over to the press censor's office and handed in my telegram for his *visa*. It was a faithful record of what had happened — too faithful, it appeared, for the censor, after reading it through most carefully, took up first a blue and then a red pencil, and covered the paper with obliterating marks. Still, thought I, something will be left. A vain imagination, for the censor changed his mind and, to my utmost mortification, deliberately tore up my despatch. What I felt may be more easily imagined than described—but to protest was useless, and equally useless would it have been to write such a despatch as the censor would have passed. It was one of the disagreeable incidents in the life of a war correspondent—a life full of strange and stirring experiences, a life which, on the whole, has more of the agreeable than the disagreeable in it. I speak as I have found it, and am not now considering the position of a war correspondent from the standpoint of the soldier or of the newspaper proprietor.

If I was not permitted to send news home there was no restraint on my movements. I was free to see what happened, if not free to describe what I had seen. It was the 15th of October, that is, the fifth day of the battle of the Sha-ho. I have already stated that the Eastern Army under Baron Stackelberg had recrossed the Sha-ho on the night of the 13th–14th. It was permitted to retire from a most trying and dangerous position with little molestation. This slackness in pursuit enabled it to close up with the centre under Zarubaieff, and the fear of the Russian army being cut in two was over. In all likelihood the force opposing Stackelberg in the Tu-min-ling was not strong enough for effective pursuit. It is certain the Japanese had placed in the hills a comparatively weak force, being confident of their ability in mountainous country to oppose successfully a force much superior to them in numbers. The bulk of Marshal Oyama's troops were massed in the plains south-west and south of Mukden to meet the attack of General Bilderling, and it was principally in this direction that the fight raged on the 15th. Bilderling's troops were being steadily driven back, but were still on the farther side of the Sha-ho. General Kuropatkin, from his temporary headquarters at Hoanchantze, a village east of the railway and some five or six miles on the Mukden side of the Sha-ho, had sent a message to Baron Stackelberg commanding him to despatch reinforcements to the aid of General Bilderling. The choice of Stackelberg fell on his own old corps, the brave 1st Siberian Army Corps, and

Kondratovitch with his 9th Division was at once sent off to the help of the Western Army, the rest of the corps following.

While all this was happening in the field the excitement in Mukden became very great, and increased as the roaring of the artillery grew near and more near. From the town walls, on which were crowds of Chinese watching, with anxious faces, the shells could be seen bursting in the distance, and other evidence of the nearness of the fight were abundant. Empty ammunition waggons rattled along the road to the magazine, there to refill their cases with death-dealing shells, and officers from headquarters came dashing in with messages. But the most painful evidence of the battle was the long convoy of wounded being taken to the hospitals. I have said little so far as to the casualties in the Sha-ho fight, but when about a quarter of a million men engage in combat for several days, the number of wounded must be great. Now, on the fourth day of battle, they were coming into the city in an almost continuous stream, and never shall I forget the heart-rending groans of some of these poor fellows. It is impossible to contemplate such suffering without wishing for some other solution of national quarrels than the dread arbitrament of war. As had been the case at Liao-Yang there were now not enough ambulances, and insufficient hospital accommodation, despite all the preparations made before the battle. All the hospitals were full, and still the long train of wounded poured into the city. The

doctors and nurses, as always, worked nobly, but for all that many a poor fellow was unattended, and, as far as could be judged, at any moment it might be necessary to evacuate the town; and Mukden be added to Ta-shi-chao, Hai-Cheng, and Liao-Yang in the list of places from which the Russian troops had "advanced northward." The Russo-Chinese Bank packed its money and other valuables to be ready for any emergency, and even despatched consignments of silver to Kharbin. Despite all appearances the *Manchurian Army Gazette* came out with a glowingly worded article, announcing that the Russians had gained a glorious victory at the Tu-min-ling and that Rennenkampf was over the Tai-tze-ho and close to Liao-Yang. This was news indeed, news which would even please the censor. It was no incomplete account, moreover, but something calculated to bring the blush of shame to the cheek of the mere chronicler of the plain unvarnished truth. Precise details of the fight were given, all as plain as a pikestaff and as clear as crystal; the author's imagination must have been splendidly vivid. Although, save for one or two correspondents who, like myself, had ridden in from Beaneapudze, no one outside the highest military officials knew exactly what had happened to the Eastern Army, the Mukden public were not deceived by the yarn of the gazetteer—the roar of the approaching guns was even more eloquent than the pen of the romancist.

I made up my mind to see something of the fight in Bilderling's army, and mounted my pony

with that intention. However, before I could get away, a little incident happened which for the second day in succession caused me to lose my temper with a Chinaman. My landlord, fearing (apparently) that I was going to bolt without paying my shot, closed the gate of the yard in my face and insisted that before I left I should pay an exorbitant rent. (The Chinese number among them, let me parenthetically remark, the most avaricious people I have ever met.) Having given my host no reason for his insolent behaviour I resolved on strong measures. I had been told, and indeed believe, that the worst thing a European can do, in a dispute with a Chinaman, is to strike him—it is the assailant, not the assailer, who loses "face," but this notwithstanding, I now seized hold of my landlord's pigtail and twisted it until he yelled for mercy. This "new way" with troublesome landlords is not recommended for general adoption, but it had the merit of being effective, and a few minutes later I was on the Great Mandarin Road riding south to the nearest point of the field of battle. The plain around and beyond me was thickly populated, being valuable agricultural land. The unfortunate villagers were great sufferers by the battle, and I met hundreds of refugees whose houses had been either destroyed or seized by the Russian troops in their retreat. The refugees were making their way to Mukden with the few chattels they were able to carry.

In an hour or two I had reached the battlefield, a flat expanse (if an occasional hillock be excepted)

dotted with villages and groves of trees. In convenient situations were placed dressing stations, to which blood-stained men could be seen slowly hobbling. The Russians were being heavily shelled by the enemy's shrapnel, whilst now and again, instead of the white balls of smoke made by the shrapnel, a *shimosa* (high explosive) shell would hurtle through the air, burst with a terrific bang as it struck the ground, and emit dense clouds of black smoke. Though the firing line was maintained intact, the Russians were still losing ground, and might even be forced back to the Hun-ho entrenchments. There was in Bilderling's army an amount of demoralisation, there was little cohesion, the corps had got mixed, and each commander seemed to be fighting on his own account. So the day wore on and night fell with the two armies still engaged. Bivouacking on the plain I regaled myself on a ration of some of those wonderful tinned foods which give you a choice of dishes and of meats, in accordance with the way they are prepared. Thus, on the label one reads this—or something like it—"For boiled rabbit simmer over fire one hour: for rabbit soup boil for an hour and a half: for hashed partridge add water and boil rapidly for half an hour." By whatever name you choose to call it, the ration is grateful and comforting to the hungry man.

The situation on the 16th of October was much the same as on the 15th; the fight went on, and Bilderling was forced back to the Sha-ho. General Kuropatkin was still at Hoanchantze, though at

one period of the battle the Commander-in-Chief, eager to see for himself the progress of the fight, had joined Bilderling's army, and whilst at the front had come under an extremely hot shell fire. It was not yet certain if the Japanese pursuit had spent its force, or whether the Russian army, its various units now closer together, could compel the enemy to stop. The headquarters' staff appeared to think that Marshal Oyama had received from the army besieging Port Arthur a reinforcement of a division and a half, but this proved not to be the case. It was now possible to obtain particulars of the fighting of the Western Army in the first two critical days, and to ascertain the tactics followed by the Japanese. As has been already stated, the Japanese had concentrated their strength in the plain, primarily with the object of getting the greatest force to meet the Russians on a field of battle more liked by the soldiers of the Tsar than broken or mountainous country. The Russian prefers to fight on the flat, and therefore might there be considered more dangerous.

On the opening day of the great fight the Russian Western Army made a furious assault on the Japanese positions. For this the enemy was prepared, and every attack made was repulsed, the loss of life being great, especially on the Russian side. The Japanese, whose strategy and tactics always savoured of the text-books, followed the method advocated by German tacticians for an army on the defensive, and adopted the "Active-Passive" system. Having successfully withstood

the onslaught of Bilderling's troops on the 11th, they did not wait for a renewal of the attack, but on the 12th themselves took the offensive, and falling upon the Russians with almost incredible fury pressed home their attack and drove the Russians back pell-mell. What happened to Bilderling also befell Zarubaieff, as has been described. It was the victorious advance of the Japanese which I had witnessed afar off from Temple Hill. Now, from the lips of those who had been in the fight, I heard many stories of heroism and death. When the Japanese turned the tables on their foes the Russians lost 24 guns. These batteries were out in the open, waiting for orders which never came, whilst, unknown to them, their infantry escort had withdrawn; and without a protecting force a battery is practically helpless, when it comes to close quarters. Seeing their opportunity a body of Japanese infantry carefully stalked the batteries, and having got near unperceived, or else been taken by the Russians for their own escort, the Japanese opened a heavy fire on the unfortunate gunners. Most of them perished whilst endeavouring to save the guns, which were secured by the enemy. One incident brought to my notice reveals clearly the terrible nature of the fighting during the first three days. During the retreat, a general commanding a division noticed an officer and some forty men returning through the lines. It appeared as if this was a small party which had been charged with some outpost duty and had shown the white feather. Incensed at their appar-

ent cowardice the general rode up to the officer and asked him what he meant by deserting his post. With a somewhat grim smile the officer, saluting, said, "Sir, this is all that is left of my regiment." That regiment had gone into action over 2000 strong. Could any word-painting be more eloquent of the nature of the struggle than this simple recital of fact? Among the killed, it may be worth noting, was a man who had previously needlessly intruded himself into a quarrel with which he had no concern, namely, Colonel Maximoff. This officer was one of the Boer mercenaries in the war of 1899–1902, and had been with Commandant Kolbé in numerous engagements with the British, notably the battle of Sand River.

Some of the camp stories of the battle were decidedly amusing. There was a yarn about the balloon section which may bear repeating. Two officers who intended to ascend to ascertain the Japanese position had taken their place in the car and given the signal to let go. The ascent had hardly begun when a sudden gust of wind caught the balloon and carried it towards the Japanese lines, but minus the car, which snapped its connecting ropes. The astonished aeronauts were left up in the air staring into space, but not for long, as down came the car with a very decided bump. The Russians, it may be added here, did not find balloons generally as useful as was expected. They must always be held captive, and they afford a target for the enemy's artillery, as had been shown at Liao-Yang, when the Japanese by the use of

shrapnel disabled a balloon—the bag being pierced in several places. Then from any considerable height it is difficult to ascertain the formation of the ground, folds and depressions big enough to conceal troops appearing perfectly level. On the other hand, a captive balloon over one's own camp is invaluable for signalling purposes—as is indeed obvious.

CHAPTER XXVII

CAPTURE OF PUTILOFF SOPKA—ADVENTURE AT ERDAGO

THE troops of Generals Bilderling and Zarubaieff were finally forced to retreat behind the Sha-ho, but the Japanese, who must have been almost as exhausted as their foes by the week of fighting, now relaxed their efforts. The pursuit ceased, and the Russians set about to make a new position for themselves. Mukden was safe for the time being, nor was it necessary to go back to the Hun-ho lines. The position taken up was in general parallel with the Sha-ho and along the ridge of hills which overlooked its valley. These positions were not taken without interference, for the Japanese main position was the other side of the river, the two armies being within range of gun fire. Each army, too, had an outpost, as it were, within the enemy's camp. Temple Hill, beyond the Sha-ho, was still held by Stackelberg's army, two battalions being posted upon it. On the other hand, a small hill on the farther side of the river, considerably to the west of Temple Hill and some three or four miles east of the railway, had been seized by the Japanese during the pursuit, and was

still held. On the summit of this hill was a solitary tree, and when events rendered the hill famous it was promptly and appropriately named in England, Lonely Tree Hill. Its native name is of no importance, and what the Japanese call it I do not remember, but to the Russians it will for ever be known as Putiloff's Sopka;[1] its capture was the only real success of the Russians throughout the war.

Of all the incidents in the Sha-ho fighting, the capture of this hill stands out as the most striking. Not only was it a victory for the Russians, the most decisive they gained, it was the only occasion on which Japanese field-guns fell into the hands of the enemy. Decisive as was the victory, it was only purchased at enormous cost. I learned the particulars of the fight from a staff officer. A few hours before dark, on the 16th of October, General Kuropatkin made up his mind that it was necessary to dislodge the Japanese from the hill, and gave the order that it was to be done, despite the fact that the general commanding at that part of the field declared it to be an impossible task. General Putiloff was told off to accomplish this "impossibility," and he succeeded. However, it was only by bringing a force of fully twenty to one against the foe that he achieved his purpose; the Japanese were simply overcome by weight of numbers. They held the hill with about two battalions supported by two batteries. After a severe artillery preparation, General Putiloff gave the order to

[1] Sopka. This word is Russian for Hill.

storm the hill. From almost every side the battalions advanced to the attack. There could be no going back of the leading battalions, save on to the bayonets of their comrades pressing behind. (One of the leading battalions was said to have been purposely given this post of danger, so that it should be compelled to redeem the character it had lost in the previous fighting by too easily concluding itself defeated.) Up the hill swarmed the Russians, the foremost files continually falling before the withering rifle fire of the defenders, while every shrapnel found many victims. They had too good a target to miss, firing straight into the brown of the foe. Little by little the Russians advanced, the defenders never flinching; indeed, they had no thought of giving way, and so at last the Muscovite and the Jap came to the final hand-grip, the fierce bayonet thrust. Fighting to the last gasp, the defenders were nearly all killed or wounded. Friend and foe lay dead in hundreds all over the little hill. And the guns? With a fierce shout of joy the two batteries were seized by the victors; here was something whereof to boast, something to fill an official despatch. It was night when the summit was won, and hardly had the guns been seized when from the farther side surged up more Japanese in an endeavour to recapture the post. At this juncture occurred one of those dramatic scenes which live in memory when vastly more important events are forgotten. A young officer of Kondratovitch's Division had been sent to General Putiloff with a message, and reached

the hero of the fight in his moment of victory. Looking round, the youngster saw the lonely little tree right on the summit, and a longing to touch it seized him. Impulsively he turned to the General, his heart beating high with patriotic fever, and besought his permission to just touch the tree. Permission was granted, the officer darted forward, put out his hand and accomplished his desire. At that moment the Japanese counter-attack swept up the hill and caught the officer in its tide. Hemmed round by the foe, he defended himself bravely with his sword, but presently a Japanese bayonet crashed through his chest, and pierced to the heart the young hero fell. The victor had no time to rejoice, for as he tried to withdraw his bayonet he was himself struck dead by a Russian bullet. In the end Putiloff remained master of the hill. Costly as had been its capture, its possession was worth the price paid.

By Wednesday, the 19th of October, the battle had ended, but there was intermittent firing along the line of the Sha-ho, the proximity of the armies keeping each on the alert. By this time the various Russian corps had taken up the positions which, as the event proved, they were destined to occupy for months. Stackelberg's, or the Eastern, army formed the left wing. The 3rd Siberian Army Corps was posted on the extreme east, the 2nd Siberian Army Corps in the centre, and the 1st Siberian Army Corps on the right. The main position was along the chain of hills already mentioned as overlooking the Sha-ho, which was

perhaps two miles distant. In front of the 3rd Siberian Army Corps was the village of Beaneapudze, which instead of being Stackelberg's headquarters was now only held by an outpost. It was a dangerous place to be in, being within range of the Japanese entrenchments on the farther side of the river. Opposite the position of the 2nd Siberian Army Corps was Temple Hill, the post beyond the river being held by the Russians. Baron Stackelberg's new headquarters were at a village called Kandolesan, which was, roughly, midway between the camps of the 2nd and 1st Siberian Army Corps, but some distance in the rear. From it ran in a N.W. direction roads to Mukden and Fushun. A second line of hills ran behind those on which Stackelberg had his main positions. Just beyond his right these hills retreated from the river, making a bend north at a fairly sharp angle and forming consequently a weak point in the Russian line. Farther to the right and near the Sha-ho was the village of Erdago, which became famous later on during the battle of Mukden. Thence the Russian line extended west past Putiloff Sopka and the railway for several miles. The Japanese faced us all along our front, and kept outposts or reconnoitring parties at places on our side of the river.

It was now my desire to rejoin the 1st Siberian Army Corps, and on the 19th I left Mukden for Kandolesan. I had promised to take provisions for Colonel Waters and Captain Reichman, and had a pack pony to carry them and a Chinaman to guide the pony. A procession of two we left the city.

Crossing the bridge over the Hun-ho I heard shouts, and was horrified on looking round to see pony and provisions disappear into the river. A passing cart had collided with my pony, and sent him against the frail wooden rail at the side of the bridge. The rail gave way, with the result stated. Happily the water was shallow, and I recovered most of the bottles and tins of meat as well as the pony. As usual the byroads were very difficult to find, and more difficult to follow, owing to the quagmires which marked their course, a consequence of recent heavy rains. Meeting one of Stackelberg's staff officers escorting two waggons containing stores for the mess at Kandolesan, I was invited to put my things in one of the waggons. This done, the Chinaman and pony were sent back to Mukden, and I went on with the provision waggons. That night was spent at Hoanchantze, where General Kuropatkin maintained his headquarters, and where we were entertained by three doctors and a priest with true Russian hospitality. In the morning a visit was paid to the Commander-in-Chief's headquarters. Drawn up in a line in front of General Kuropatkin's house were the Japanese guns captured at Putiloff Sopka. They were objects of great interest, crowds of soldiers minutely inspecting them. There were mountain guns and field guns, some thirteen or fourteen in all. There were also a good many Japanese prisoners at Hoanchantze, and what with having captured, besides Lonely Tree Hill, the guns, and quite a number of prisoners, Kuropatkin's staff were a little elated.

It was a time with them to be thankful for small mercies. Among the prisoners were a good many wounded, and I gladly testify to the great care and even tenderness shown to them by the Russians. It seemed to me that more was done for these men than for the Russian wounded. The guards showered presents of cigarettes and eatables upon their charges, and even tried to carry on a friendly conversation with them.

Leaving headquarters, my companion and I continued our way to Kandolesan, but the waggons made very slow progress through the heavy roads. We had not gone far when we found General Mischenko in action, busily shelling the Japanese lines, and lingered a while to watch the fight.

Later in the day we had been overtaken by a non-commissioned officer and four infantrymen of the 1st Siberian Army Corps on their way to rejoin the corps, and they augmented our little party. Shortly before reaching Erdago we were riding slowly along when a bullet whistled by our ears, immediately followed by another. Looking round, we saw in a grove of trees about 150 yards away four or five Chinamen with rifles in their hands. We at once gave chase, but the men ran like hares, and succeeded in dodging us among the rocks which dotted the hills. Our assailants were, beyond a doubt, Hunhutzes who had come down to the road to take pot shots at passers-by.

We had got rid of the Hunhutzes, but our misadventures that day were not ended. My officer-companion informed me that there was a

large Russian post at Erdago, and there we contemplated spending the night. Entering the village in the afternoon, the sound of rifle-shots from the direction of the Sha-ho, which was close at hand on our right, greeted our ears. Instead of finding a large post in the place, we could see no one; the village was deserted, and we began to feel in an unpleasant predicament. However, in the yard of a house at the farther end of the main street we found a few Cossacks saddled up and ready, in accordance with their instructions, to retire at the first appearance of the Japanese. There was obviously no safety in staying at this spot, nor could the Cossacks give us much information concerning the road we should take. I had my own opinion as to the proper route, and so had the captain in charge of the mess waggons. He trusted implicitly to his map (a strange thing, considering how defective the maps had proved), and chose a road which kept fairly close to the river. I felt very doubtful about this being the right road, but was overruled by the confidence of my companion. There was for some time not a sign of life anywhere save in our little caravan, and the villages we passed had all been deserted. At length one of the Cossacks accompanying us rode up and pointed to the hills directly to our right, and there, sure enough, were the Japanese. It was impossible to take them for Russian outposts. Upon seeing this the captain lost confidence in his map and the road we were taking and turned to me for advice. I told him that in my opinion we were either within

the Japanese outposts, or else between the lines of the two armies. The situation was a little awkward, as night was now falling and our waggons could not cover more than three or four miles an hour. Left to settle our course, I decided on a road going more northerly than that by the river, and following it we reached a Russian outpost in safety. Here the captain wished to pass the night, but I advised going still farther back, as, if the outpost was attacked during the night, the waggons would seriously hinder our movements and might get captured. I did not forget that the stores to replenish my own and friends' mess at Kandolesan were in the waggons. At that moment the non-commissioned officer in charge of the Cossacks rode up and said that he was short of ammunition, and that his orders were to fall back at once should the Japanese attack. This decided the captain, and continuing our journey we reached in about an hour a village occupied by a sotnia of Cossacks. Here we spent the night, becoming the guests of two Cossack officers, as excellent men as one would wish to know. We learnt from them that we had really been within the Japanese outposts, and to illustrate the dangerous nature of the road we had traversed they told us the fate of an orderly sent that morning to Erdago. As he did not return, a search party was organised, and they found him by the road, dead, his body stripped naked and slashed all over in the manner a salmon is crimped, and his horse shot dead by his side. There is little doubt that this was the work of the Hunhutzes whose

acquaintance we had made in the morning, and who had unfortunately escaped us. The next day we reached Baron Stackelberg's headquarters, and were most heartily welcomed, as the mess stores were almost empty. The captain and I said little about our adventures on the road, and how nearly the mess provisions had gone as a present to General Kuroki.

There was a good deal of activity at Kandolesan at that time, the Eastern Army being engaged in occupying and fortifying the position overlooking the Sha-ho. The men were very fatigued and somewhat depressed, but for two or three days there had been, skirmishes apart, no fighting, and with a chance of regular food and sleep the men were recovering their condition. During the battle the commissariat arrangements had broken down, and for two days the 1st Siberian Army Corps, attacking the Tu-min-ling, had had no rations issued to them. It was wonderful to see how patiently these men, and the Russian soldiers generally, endured hardships and privations. As a rule the common soldier is content with little food, and will even bear an empty stomach without much grumbling. And I may here set down a fact I often remarked, namely, that the men preferred their black (rye) bread to any other ration, even soup or meat. On the march this bread is baked hard, broken up into fragments and called biscuit, being carried about in sacks.

After staying a day or two at Kandolesan I gathered that there would be no more heavy

fighting immediately, and with Colonel Waters I returned to Mukden.

Though in the Eastern Army all was quiet, General Mischenko was still harassing the Japanese in the centre, while the enemy was continually shelling Putiloff Sopka. These were the last echoes of the great battle of the Sha-ho.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE SHA-HO BATTLE

THE battle of the Sha-ho was ended, but it was weeks before Mukden regained its normal appearance, or before the Russian army recovered from the effects of that terrible contest. It was, however, now possible to form an estimate of the battle as a whole. The Russian losses had been far greater than at Liao-Yang, but it was not the loss of life which was the most serious effect of the battle. That lay in the fact that, at last, the Russians began to understand that they were inferior to their opponents. Of the rapidity with which the Russians recover their spirit after a crushing reverse I have already written, and the men and the majority of the officers, at first much cast down by their non-success, regained their tone in a week or two. They were not, it is true, as confident as they had been after previous reverses, for they had marched from the Hun-ho gaily in full expectation of victory, and had come back shattered, their ranks depleted, and with many a gun lost. Still to a large extent both officers and men had recovered their self-reliance, and were ready once more to meet the foe. Though this was generally

the case, the more thoughtful among the officers, including many of those in high positions who were forced to look facts in the face, took another view. It dawned on them at length that the Russian army had been given a task beyond its power to accomplish, and a feeling akin to hopelessness beset them. The Commander-in-Chief suffered a little from this moral *malaise*; a nervousness as to the future rendered him uneasy, and from officers who enjoyed his close companionship I learned that General Kuropatkin was a "smaller man" than before the battle. It was natural, nay inevitable, that it should be so. Practically a third of the mighty army he had launched against the forces of Marshal Oyama had fallen in the battle. The losses were stated at first to be 45,000 killed and wounded, but as the full tale of disaster was disclosed the estimate had to be revised, and it was found that the total casualties were fully 75,000. This was an enormous weakening of the army, and it proved more difficult than it had done after Liao-Yang to fill up the gaps in the regiments. Over 1000 officers had been killed or wounded. The brunt of the battle fell on the Russian right and centre (*i.e.* Bilderling's army and Zarubaieff's corps); in the 1st European Army Corps alone the losses were put at 273 officers and 7109 men. The Eastern Army had lost thousands in the attack on the Tu-min-ling, and at Bensihu; but once Stackelberg had been forced to retire his losses were light, save in the 1st Siberian Army Corps which had been lent to Bilderling, and which

again lost heavily, especially Kondratovitch's 9th Division. The number of men killed outright was far above the average in big battles, and the number of dead bodies that one saw was appalling. It is said that nearly 15,000 Russian dead were left on the field. As at Liao-Yang, artillery fire played a most important part in the fight, and although the Russians took the offensive, 50 per cent. of their casualties were caused by gun fire. The Japanese made the very best use of their artillery, and the execution they did reflects the highest credit on their gunners, for the Russian guns were undoubtedly superior in range to theirs and probably there were more of them. Whilst they had weapons inferior in calibre, the Japanese guns were more mobile than those of the Russians, and they approached boldly close to the Russian batteries.[1]

While the Japanese artillery was excellent, their infantry was superb, and showed extraordinary dash and mobility, especially on the 12th, 13th, and 14th of October. They had by then considerably worn themselves out, and although the battle did not really end until the 19th, the Russians, from

[1] The Russian guns were from 35 to 37 cwts. draught weight. To compensate for this heaviness the batteries were magnificently horsed. Indeed, the Russian artillery and transport horses were excellent, and there was little sickness or death among them. This was not attributable to the men in charge, for the transport drivers were both bad and careless horsemasters, usually driving at top speed over all sorts of rough ground. The health of the horses was due rather to their own good qualities, to the short marches they had, and the long rests they enjoyed, and also to the excellence of the climate, the freedom from poisonous grasses, and the absence of horse diseases usually so prevalent amongst armies in the field.

the 15th onward, found that they were better able to hold their ground. The Russian infantry had had an enormous strain put upon them in this nine days' fight, and, apart from the moral effect of being in retreat, the suffering then endured from want of food and want of sleep can hardly be appreciated. They were kept in the firing line for very long periods, and suffered in efficiency thereby, a point which emphasises the importance of replenishing the firing line from the reserves at comparatively short intervals. The supply of ammunition for the men was also a matter of great difficulty, and to obviate this the soldiers went into action with over 300 rounds of cartridges per man. (As it was, practically all the ammunition accumulated prior to the battle was expended during the fighting.) The heavy kit in which the men had been accustomed to march during the summer was now largely cast aside, being either left on the ground when they went into the firing line, or placed among the regimental transport.

During the battle the Russians had used every available man and gun, and, disastrous as had been the result, there was this one tangible advantage gained—the new position was a better one than that formerly held on the Hun-ho. The Sha-ho position certainly acted as a better buffer than that on the other river against an attack on Mukden, and for political reasons the Russians were most anxious to avoid a battle under the walls of the Manchu capital. The officers as they discussed the incidents of the battle had that comfort wherewith to solace

themselves, and it was almost the only comfort they could extract from it, except the assertion that the Japanese had lost so heavily that the victory was not worth purchasing. This, however, was not the case, for the Japanese losses, though very severe, were by no means as great as those of the Russians. Reviewing the situation, the events preceding, during, and after the battle, I gradually formed the conclusion that the war had failed to produce a single Russian General equal to handling successfully such large bodies of men as were now in the field. The Russian character appears to me unmethodical, a lack of forethought is manifest, and the sort of feeling that somehow or other things will look after themselves and "we will put it off till to-morrow"—the *mañana* of the Spaniards. This state of mind leads in a battle—as it did on this occasion—to many orders and counter-orders, inevitably causing much confusion. In these circumstances the Russians had experienced great luck in extricating themselves from the perilous position in which they were throughout the 13th and 14th of October. Once their centre had been broken there seemed nothing to prevent the Japanese dividing the Russian armies in two, and, as stated in a previous passage, defeating either wing in detail or occupying Mukden. On the 13th Baron Stackelberg had expressed the opinion that either of these things might happen. Most of my colleagues and the foreign attachés with Stackelberg seemed to think that the Eastern Army would be cut off from the rest of the Russian force and from

Mukden, and compelled to retire on Fushun and thence to Tieling. But, as the reader knows, this did not happen; the Japanese pursuit of the Eastern Army unaccountably slackening, due perhaps (as was the general belief in the Russian camp) to the exhaustion of the Japanese troops.

The general inclination in the army was, as usual, to blame Baron Stackelberg for the non-success at the Sha-ho. In the first place, it was frequently said, Stackelberg ought to have broken through at the Tu-min-ling, or crossed the Tai-tze-ho at Bensihu and threatened Liao-Yang. The reader can judge for himself how hard Stackelberg had striven to gain the passes, and how unjust it was to reproach him for not doing so. Then again, it was urged, and with great insistence, that when the 4th Siberian Army Corps under Zarubaieff had been driven back and the Japanese wedge forced into the centre of the Russian army, Stackelberg should have at once abandoned his attack on the passes and the attempt to outflank the enemy, and concentrated his entire strength against the left wing of the Japanese centre (*i.e.* the force which had wedged itself past Zarubaieff's men). To have done so would have been excellent policy, and—as the account of the battle already given shows—Stackelberg, as soon as he knew of the disaster to the Russian centre, did send the 2nd Siberian Army Corps to threaten the Japanese wedge. Whether or not he could have done more than he did is a matter of opinion, but the 2nd Siberian Army Corps was the only corps he had in reserve,

and to get the 3rd and 1st Corps away from their positions (where they had lost heavily) and hurl the tired men on the Japanese wedge would have taken much time. And time meant everything, for had the (supposititious) flank attack on the enemy proved a failure, it would have meant absolute disaster to the entire Russian army, as in that case there would have been nothing to prevent the Japanese from surrounding the Russians and cutting them off from their base. What Stackelberg did lack was a reserve of cavalry or mounted infantry. If when the centre was first broken he could have poured 10,000 good horsemen on to the Japanese wedge, it would either have been broken or forced to retire, and the Russian line thus re-established. As it was, the cavalry that the Russians had was not where it was wanted in the hour of trial. In short, in my opinion Stackelberg did everything that was possible with the force he had at his command. Moreover, I think it extremely probable that General Kuropatkin, never anxious to risk too much, ordered him to retire when he did and not hazard everything in an attack on the Japanese centre. And with this *apologia* for the Eastern Army, to which I was attached, I will end my reflections on the tactical aspects of the battle.

One of the saddest consequences of the battle was the misery it entailed on the Manchurian peasantry, at which I have briefly hinted in a former chapter. The country between Liao-Yang and Mukden is thickly inhabited by a race of industrious farmers. Nearly all of them suffered

greatly during the retreat of the Russians. Living in Mukden, one had on every hand too patent evidence of the trials these innocent people had had to endure. Long trains of unfortunates, mostly women and children, toiled painfully into the city, where in a short while many thousands of refugees had collected. Many of these women and children were wounded, and piteous were the tales they told of husbands and fathers killed, of whole villages turned out of their homes, the woodwork and the furniture of their houses used for firewood, their provisions seized by the famished soldiers. It was only too apparent that large numbers of Chinese men had perished at the hands of the Cossacks. Their inability or indifference to distinguish between a peaceful farmer and a bandit had caused the death of many an innocent man; sabre cuts and bayonet wounds told plainly that many of these refugees had been the victims of the soldiers. The conduct of the troops to the inhabitants had indeed undergone a startling change since the days in the eastern hills with Count Keller, when a Cossack dare not take the smallest liberty with a Chinese except at the risk of condign punishment. Well was it now for the unfortunate refugees that they could look elsewhere for help than to the Russians, who did absolutely nothing to relieve the distress caused by the war. The Chinese in Mukden, however, showed themselves keenly alive to the calls of humanity. A Relief Committee, which received the support of the Manchu Governor of the city, was formed, and

many substantial subscriptions to this fund came from wealthy mandarins and merchants. The Chinese, according to my observation, are generous in their dealings with the unfortunate, and certainly the mandarins most widely respected were those conspicuous for good deeds. The Chinese Relief Committee worked hand in hand with the British missionaries, who proved the truest helpers of the refugees, as they could care for the sick and wounded as well as for the destitute. Dr. Christie, Dr. Ross, Dr. Young, Mr. Ingles, Mr. Pullar, and Mr. Fulton, all members of the Scotch or Irish Protestant missions in the city, were untiring in their care of these poor people, giving them food and lodging, clothes and money to the utmost extent of their ability. Besides this, Dr. Christie and Dr. Young, assisted by Chinese medical students they had themselves trained, relieved hundreds of the Chinese wounded in their magnificent hospital. From the lips of the patients one heard distressing accounts of the hardships they had endured. I remember the story told by one unfortunate girl who lay in bed riddled with bullets. She narrated how she and her family decided to leave their home and seek safety in the city. Confused by the movements of the troops and frightened by the noise of battle, they lost their way and found themselves between the two armies. Hardly knowing what to do, they ran first towards the Japanese lines. The Japanese did not cease their fire, and most of the party were hit. The remainder then turned round and ran

straight for the Russian lines. It was equally impossible for the Russians to avoid hitting them, and the girl in hospital was the only survivor of her family. From her condition it seemed to me that before long she too would have joined the majority. Still, she, with hundreds more, had the greatest attention from the hands of the noble-hearted men who had devoted their lives to the physical as well as the spiritual well-being of those with whom they had chosen to dwell. It is largely owing to the life work of Dr. Christie and such as he that the name of England is so honoured in Manchuria to-day. Well may we be proud of them, and help forward their great mission.

A pendant to the battle of the Sha-ho was the capture of Temple Hill by the Japanese. After the battle this position was the only one on the farther side of the Sha-ho held by the Russians, and for a time the two battalions placed on it were not seriously molested by the enemy. Both armies were, in fact, busy strengthening their new positions, the Russian soldiers being kept at work trench-digging day and night. The artillery of either army would indulge in desultory firing, and this firing was occasionally heavy. However, the Russian position was made day by day stronger, and Temple Hill served them as a very useful outpost, standing, as it were, within the Japanese line, and from its height affording those on it a magnificent view of the country towards Liao-Yang. Then came a day when the foe determined

that the Russians should no longer enjoy this advantage. Placing artillery in a position secure from reply by the Russians, they subjected the hill to a severe bombardment. To send guns to aid the defenders was an impossibility for Stackelberg, as the river would have to be crossed under a terrific fire from the Japanese main position. On the hill itself there were nothing but machine guns, and the battalions holding it were thus in an almost hopeless situation, unable to reply to the enemy's fire and cut off from succour from their own side. The Japanese shrapnel wrought terrible havoc among them, and under cover of this fire the Japanese infantry climbed the hill and carried it by assault. The Russians fought desperately, and lost about 800 men killed and wounded, the remainder effecting their retreat across the Sha-ho, a stream easily waded. The Japanese had taken the hill, captured several machine guns, and inflicted a heavy loss on the defenders,—it was in its way their revenge for the loss of Putiloff's Sopka.

After this incident the two armies kept each to their own side of the river, and Temple Hill was the last serious engagement for many weeks. On the Russian side the authorities employed the time in hurrying out fresh troops to make good the losses sustained at the Sha-ho and in replenishing the ammunition of the army.

CHAPTER XXIX

ALEXEIEFF RETURNS HOME—NEWS OF THE NORTH SEA OUTRAGE

EXCEPT for occasional heavy rain, the weather for some time had been agreeable and the temperature high. As October drew to an end the night air grew cold, even frosty; one could no longer sleep with no roof save the canopy of heaven, and it became necessary to get shelter of some sort. The soldiers by the Sha-ho made for themselves burrows,—*zemliankis*, as they called them,—real underground chambers, which in the winter gave excellent protection against the cold, as well as the fire of the enemy. The troops cantoned in villages sent in to Mukden for matting and paper windows. The windows in Manchuria are filled, not with glass, but with white parchment paper, which, though it admits light, obscures the vision. These paper windows had suffered severely during the fighting and the wholesale destruction of villages, and the demand for them in the Mukden market was great. On the 5th of November we had our first fall of snow, which caused those who could afford it to pay visits to the houses of the fur merchants, where most comfortable (and expensive)

goods were to be had. It was about this time that two or three trains arrived from Moscow laden with warm clothing and all sorts of luxuries in the way of wines and provisions. The trains were drawn up on a siding under the care of officers who superintended the disposal of the goods. The sale was conducted on the same lines as in the Field Force canteen in South Africa, and, besides officers, all attachés and war correspondents were allowed to buy.

At Mukden and in the camp at the Sha-ho there was a good deal of speculation as to the fate of General Kuropatkin, in consequence of the last defeat. According to some authorities, his recall was imminent; but whether they thought this probable or not, most of the officers hoped that he would remain. Confidence in him had been lost to a surprisingly little extent, and with the rank and file Kuropatkin's popularity remained. The army did not blame its chief for the reverses it had met; apart from criticism of this or that commander, the feeling was that the non-success of their arms was due to the interference of the politicians, to the Government in St. Petersburg, and more particularly to His Excellency the Viceroy Alexeieff. The truth of the matter can be known to very few people, but, judging by events, the Viceroy rather than the General was held responsible in Russia, for while Kuropatkin remained, Alexeieff went. The announcement, within a fortnight of the battle of the Sha-ho, that Admiral Alexeieff had been ordered to start at once for home "in order to confer with

the Emperor," was hailed by the army with delight, and every one joined in ascribing the disasters of the past to the man who had lost the favour of his master. The Viceroy was allowed to depart without any sign of public sorrow. After a final manifesto to all and sundry he left Kharbin showering decorations on the members of his staff. At last General Kuropatkin was free and in supreme command in the East. Sanguine spirits foretold all sorts of good things as likely to result from this change.

The army in Manchuria was not much behind the times in the receipt of the news of the world, and from telegrams and Chinese newspapers, printed in English in Tientsin and Shanghai, we were informed of the North Sea outrage. To us at Mukden, as to the rest of the world, war between England and Russia seemed likely to result from this killing of British seamen, and on the whole the majority of the Russians (or the majority of those whose opinions carry weight) would have welcomed a war. Such was certainly the view taken by Kuropatkin's officers, with some exceptions. They looked upon the conflict with Japan in which they were engaged as caused by the Machiavellian diplomacy of England. Nothing could convince the ordinary regimental officer that Japan was other than a tool used by England in order to injure Russia. That Japan on her own initiative should have dared to defy Russia was to them unthinkable. So when what had happened off the Dogger Bank on the anniversary of Trafal-

gar Day came to be known, the conviction in the army that torpedo-boats had been sent out by England to destroy the Baltic Fleet was unshakable. I was told so again and again by the closest of my Russian friends. The torpedo-boats, they would argue, might not have been English, but Scandinavian, and hired for the purpose, and, of course, the Hull fishermen were in league with the Japanese agents; and so on, and so on. The chances of war led to the discussion of the probable scene of operations, which, all agreed, would be on the north-west frontier of India. An infantry colonel, with whom I had a long conversation on the subject, expressed the opinion that it would be quite easy for Russia to drive England out of India. His view was the one held by most officers to whom I talked on the subject, and I had many a friendly argument upon it. They were quite prepared to talk about what they would do, and how they would do it, and in return showed no resentment of adverse criticism on their own army.

At the same time that we received the news about the firing on the fishing-boats, we learned that Port Arthur was in a very bad way. According to our information nearly all the houses in the fortress had been demolished by shell fire, and attacks were constantly being made by General Nogi's troops on the weary garrison. Many officers stated that the arrival of the Baltic Fleet and the defeat of Admiral Togo was now the only chance left of finishing the campaign satis-

factorily. "We shall, of course, beat the Japs in several battles yet, but without the help of the fleet it will be hard to drive them back to their own country." At the same time there was a good deal of unfriendly comment on the personnel of Admiral Rozhdestvensky's command. In illustration of the spirit that animated some of the younger officers I may mention that I was told by two or three of them that they had ordered new tents and outfits for the summer campaign in Korea. The summer of 1905 has come (one may hope more certainly in Manchuria than in England), but those young officers are not in Korea. If not killed they are somewhere north of Tieling.

On the 6th of November we got Chinese papers, which, to the relief of some of us and to the disappointment of more, told us that the danger of an Anglo-Russian war had passed. The news was more true than some of the stories which appeared in these papers—stories which, if lacking veracity, were curious and entertaining. Soon after the battle of Liao-Yang, one of these journals printed a detailed account of the capture of Mukden ("Intelligent anticipation" this), and of the battle which raged beneath its walls. There was nothing skimpy or mean about the account; the things which hadn't happened were told to the last circumstance, with names of generals and corps engaged. It may have been this splendid piece of enterprise which led astray the *Manchurian Army Gazette*, which, as the reader knows,

described Stackelberg's great "victory" at the Tu-min-ling.

By the middle of November the thousands of wounded who had been brought into Mukden from the Sha-ho had been removed to the large base hospitals at Tieling, Kaijuan, and Kharbin. The work cast upon the hospital staff at Mukden had been enormous, and the way in which it was got through was worthy of all praise. The great majority of the wounded recovered, especially among those who suffered from rifle wounds. In the care of the sick and wounded the Red Cross hospitals took a conspicuous part. Rumour had it that the Red Cross authorities were short of cash, although ample funds had been subscribed for their use at the commencement of the war. It was said that a considerable proportion of the money sent in by the charitable public could not be accounted for.

There was little fighting at this period; every morning and evening the big guns would boom forth, and occasionally a lively skirmish took place. There was, too, a good deal of firing at night, and the concussion caused by the discharge of the big guns shook the houses at Mukden and at first rendered sleep difficult. But one got accustomed to the noise and the shaking after a while and slept on undisturbed. Old residents in Manchuria now began to assure us that the cold in the winter would be so intense that active operations would have to cease. Terrible stories were told as to the effect of the cold, stories that forcibly reminded one of the prognostications in the summer about

"the rains." I was inclined to be sceptical as to the cold, seeing that the prophecies concerning the rains had come to naught. Reservists from Siberia and fresh troops from Europe came through in large numbers, so that in two months or so the waste of the Sha-ho was more than made good. It was in these November days that I determined to take a little holiday and go sight-seeing at Tieling, being accompanied on this expedition by Major Schönmeyer, the Chilian military attaché. A journey of a few hours brought us to our destination, and here we found quarters at the Hotel Poltava, which rivalled the Carlton in its tariff if not in its comfort. Tieling at that time was the headquarters of many Greeks, Circassians, and other "robbers," who had established large stores, containing provisions imported from Tientsin *viâ* Sinminting. These they sold at prices varying from 100 to 500 per cent. above the purchase money, and did a thriving trade. Your Russian spends money freely, and is careless as to the cost so long as he has any roubles in his purse. The fair sex at Tieling was well represented, by ladies whose virtue, it is to be feared, was not over rigid. The town, in short, was a smaller edition of Kharbin, and boasted of a theatre, which Major Schönmeyer and I patronised. Tieling is Chinese for "the Place of Iron," and the town takes its name from two large stones, fallen meteors, which lie by the door of the principal temple. As at Mukden and Liao-Yang, the inner town is enclosed by a wall

with a gate at each of its four sides. All round the town are steep hills which rise directly from the plain, and on these hills the Russians had constructed fortifications. One day sufficed to view the sights of the place, and so we returned to Mukden. On the way back we passed many troop trains, and were interested to note that to relieve the congestion of the railway at Mukden many of the trains were stopped at stations up the line, and troops with their transport and artillery detrained, to march thence by road to the front. The main roads were in good condition, so that this plan was perfectly feasible. The new troops which arrived about this time included the 8th European Army Corps.

Baron Stackelberg now went on sick leave. He had never completely recovered from the contusion to his leg sustained at the battle of Liao-Yang, and the work and anxiety of the battle of the Sha-ho had broken down his health. He was placed in the hospital at Gun-zuh-ling. In his absence General Sassulitch took over the command of the Eastern Army. Gossip had it that Stackelberg would not return, but the report had no foundation, save in the wishes of those unfriendly to the General.

CHAPTER XXX

SOME ASPECTS OF LIFE IN MUKDEN

By the middle of November winter had set in. Snow covered the ground, and the rivers were frozen over, though for some time yet the ice was not thick enough to afford transport or guns a secure crossing. As day by day passed without any development of the military situation, one had leisure to study the city, and I found Mukden and its peoples intensely interesting. Most of the war correspondents went home during the next six weeks, and among the first to leave was Colonel Gaeke, the German military critic who had been sending accounts and criticisms of the campaign to a Berlin paper. His comrades entertained him at a farewell banquet on the 15th of November. This was but one of several entertainments given by the war correspondents, who welcomed their guests at a Chinese hotel which they had appropriated. For my part, though spending part of my time at the hotel, I set up housekeeping in a small private house, being attended by an excellent Chinese servant.

While it is impossible to give a complete account of the various phases of life in Mukden,

some of the more striking aspects of the city may be indicated. The Manchu name for the town means "the Prosperous," and probably never in its long history was it more prosperous than during the winter of 1904–5. Although the war had wrought indescribable misery in the surrounding country, it had greatly benefited Mukden and its industries. The Russians placed with the merchants enormous orders for the quilted goods which the Chinese use in cold weather (instead of woollen clothes, which they do not manufacture), for fur caps, for grain and other foodstuffs, for timber and for all the necessities of transport. Thus some millions sterling were disbursed in the town. At times there was considerable difficulty over the currency. After the occupation of Manchuria at the time of the Boxer Rising, the Russians had, with considerable trouble, accustomed the Manchu merchants to accept paper money, and, when the war with Japan began, both sides at first paid for their requisitions in notes. But, with the successes of the Japanese, the Chinese became alarmed, and the merchants began to look with suspicion on paper money.[1] Russia, they argued, would be beaten, and her notes be worthless. So there arose a demand for payment in coin, and to satisfy this demand the Russian bankers imported large quantities of bar silver. By so doing the value of the

[1] The Japanese, with their wonderful power of imitation, put into circulation many thousands of false rouble notes, but this had little to do with the disinclination of the Chinese to accept paper in payment. It was merely a little irritating device of the enemy.

paper rouble was fairly maintained. The currency question was further complicated by the great variety of coins in circulation. There was the rouble, the Mexican dollar, the Hong-Kong dollar, the Chinese dollar, and the Japanese yen, besides brass "cash," of which for a shilling you bought a long string. The fluctuations in the value of silver led to a good deal of gambling on the Exchange at Mukden. The Chinese are born financiers, and some of the operators on the Mukden market could give points to the most astute member of the London, Paris, or Johannesburg Exchanges.

The freedom with which the Russians spent their money made them popular in Mukden, nor was their expenditure confined to that incurred by the Government. The Russian officers were generous buyers of the "curios," jewellery, and furs with which the town was abundantly furnished. Rents went up, and landlords reaped golden harvests from the heavy charges they were able to obtain. Many besides the Chinese sought to share in the profit to be made out of the Russian custom, and in addition to the inevitable Greeks and Caucasians, other white traders, some of them French, sought for vacant houses in which to open shops. Any afternoon one could see in the streets crowds of officers and soldiers, and many well-dressed Chinamen, and occasionally the pretty uniform of the hospital sisters. There were always convoys marching to and from the town and the position on the Sha-ho, or to supply depôts placed outside the town. The streets were efficiently policed by

both Russian and Chinese gendarmes, who were under separate control. At night the thoroughfares were well lighted up, but it was the custom of the Chinese to bolt and bar themselves in their houses when evening came, and then the streets would be left almost entirely to the Russians and the European hangers-on of the great army. At dark the big city gates were closed, after which time no one could gain admittance to the city unless in uniform or in possession of a pass issued by the Russian commissionaire.

Despite the motley collection of nationalities in the town—people from every part of the world seemed to gather there—perfect order was maintained, and, in striking contrast to the bad conduct too often exhibited in the country districts, no Russian soldier dared to misbehave in Mukden. During all the months I spent in the city, I never saw an instance of ill-treatment of the Chinese by the Russians within the walls.

Unacquainted with Chinese civilisation, and with but hazy ideas of their manners and customs before going among them, the thing which, perhaps, impressed me most in visiting at their houses was the wonderful artistic sense they showed. The houses of the mandarins and rich merchants were beautifully and luxuriously furnished, of course after Oriental fashion. I was privileged to visit many of these houses, and the owners, who always received me with great hospitality, were delighted to show their treasures when they found that one took a pleasure in such things. Of china and

curious paintings I saw many marvellous collections. Especially interesting were the carved figures of men, trees, monkeys, and all kinds of odd creatures, jade being a favourite material for these statues. No connoisseur in Europe could be more proud of his collection or more appreciative of all that was antique and artistic than these educated Chinese. One of the mandarins with whom I made acquaintance was called "Chop Dollar," a nickname he acquired in consequence of smallpox marks all over his face. This official looked after the Imperial Palace, now uninhabited, and I spent many delightful hours examining the treasures of the Manchu Emperors stored in it, restraining with difficulty a desire to loot. This would have been a very easy proceeding, as the guards on duty were not sufficient to look after the building properly.

No less interesting in their way were the street sights in the Chinese city. There were opium dens and Chinese cafés, always well patronised, and busy bazaars which were the resort of the professional story-tellers—born orators they seemed. These *raconteurs* were seated by little tables, round which collected large crowds to whom they wove romances, histories, love stories, poetry—whatever might be the mood of the moment. I listened with great interest. Not that I understood a word of what was said, but their gestures and the faces of the crowd afforded much amusement. Then there were the native doctors, and, as they conducted their consultations and operations in little shops without fronts, one could study their methods at leisure.

To me they appeared to be, one and all, charlatans practising on the credulity of their patients—faith-healers, if you will. Their surgical treatment was barbarous. A man would come with a sore, or a bullet lodged in his body. Into the wound the doctor would pour quicksilver, and then seal it with some sort of wax or other material. In a day or two the patient would return, the seal be removed, and as the quicksilver ran out the doctor declared that that was the bad matter causing the trouble! Another favourite device was to run hot needles into the eye.[1] No wonder the hospitals and surgeries of the missionaries were patronised by many who lost faith in these methods. From the doctors', one would stroll to the quarters of the fur traders or the blacksmiths, for each trade had its separate location. The blacksmiths' work was excellent, and native-made iron goods were preferred to those of European manufacture.[2]

Though in respect of public order Mukden was a model city, it was sadly lacking in the matter of sanitation, and the most awful odours I have

[1] The reader may be interested in the following prescription, which is guaranteed to cure any disease of the eye:—Caterpillar skins, 4 oz.; vegetable oil, 4 oz.; petrified snake-spittle, 200 cash worth; spiders, 50 cash worth. Place all in a new pot, cover with a piece of new cloth, and bury in a damp place for 100 days. The mixture will then be in solution and ready for application.

[2] Iron and coal abound in Manchuria, but the mining industry is not developed, save in a few places by foreigners. In some cases where the coal seams are near the surface, the natives dig it out; and a fair amount of iron ore is extracted. Gold is also found in Manchuria. It is not mined, but alluvial gold is obtained from the rivers. In Mukden the gold is sold in bars.

ever endured were wafted about the streets, especially after a slight thaw. Among the denizens of the city the dogs were very noticeable. They abounded in every direction, and, as in Turkey and other cities of the East, acted the part of scavengers. Hundreds of hideous fat black pigs also perambulated the streets, and pork was the chief meat eaten by the inhabitants. The pork market, where enormous quantities of frozen pork was kept, was also largely patronised by the Russians. Frozen fish of curious shape were another common article of merchandise, and pheasants and sand-grouse were plentiful and cheap. As good pheasant as can be got in England one could buy for fifty kopecks a brace, and that was an abnormally high price for game. Fowls were cheap too, but they were of great muscular development. On the other hand all grain foods were dear, and one had sometimes to pay as much as a shilling for a small loaf of bread.

As in ancient Athens, there were altars to nearly all the gods in Mukden. Of its many temples some were in good condition, others were very dilapidated. Those of the Buddhists were the best kept. The Buddhists were a numerous body, and the lamas were well looked after by their people. Then there were Taoists and many Mohammedans and Christians. The United Free Church of Scotland had a large mission with hospitals for men and women, and seven or eight churches, some in charge of native pastors. The Irish Protestants had a mission also, and the

Roman Catholics another. The Romanists have a cathedral presided over by a French bishop.

The pitiable state of the thousands of refugees has already been dwelt upon. Their distress was somewhat alleviated by the brisk demand for labour in the city, and all the able-bodied refugees were enabled to get work. The outlook for these people on their return to their ruined villages was, however, very gloomy. In many cases the men had been killed, so that farms could not be tilled, while the last harvest had not been gathered owing to the ravages of the war. Although there was plenty of grain in the country north of Mukden, the prospects for the coming year in the southern districts were very black, and famine began to be feared. The Chinese did what they could to provide against such a contingency, and a sum of money to relieve distress was put aside by the Peking Treasury, and several societies were formed in China to alleviate the lot of the innocent victims of the war. In this connection I may mention that one day the Jang-Jung (Chinese Viceroy of Mukden) invited me and several other correspondents to luncheon. We entered his yamen—a building conspicuous for cleanliness and comfort—through lines of well-dressed (Chinese) soldiers and officials, and were shown into a room where a meal was served in European fashion. The Jang-Jung did not receive us personally, but sent a very important mandarin to do the honours. The only drawback to the luncheon was the persistence with which the waiters refilled our glasses with sweet champagne

bought for the occasion. The repast over, the mandarin, who presided, stated that it was his Excellency the Jang-Jung's desire to approach the foreign correspondents to seek their aid in raising subscriptions in Europe for the benefit of the refugees. Having had some experience of Chinese methods in handling money we gave an evasive answer, stating that the difficulties in the way would be almost insurmountable in consequence of the attitude of the Russians. This mandarin and all the high Chinese officials with whom I talked struck me as well educated and exceedingly 'cute men.

It was an interesting study to watch the attitude assumed towards the Russians by the Chinese. I found that the Chinese were exceedingly good judges of character, and those who came into constant contact with the Russians never allowed themselves to be bullied, assuming and enforcing an equality of condition with the invaders of their land. Many Chinese hawkers went in and out among the troops with carts laden with all sorts of useful things, and as far as I know they were never robbed,—indeed, I have seen a single Chinaman rout a dozen soldiers who tried to steal his wares. In one respect the Chinese suffered at the hands of their own countrymen. The Russians employed numbers of Chinese interpreters and guides, attached to the various staffs or to Cossack regiments. These men often behaved in a most disgraceful fashion. For instance, if a sotnia of Cossacks were out foraging and came across a

herd of cattle the Chinese guides would ride up and demand money from the herdsman, and if the blackmail were not at once forthcoming the guides would tell the Russian commander that the cattle were stolen, whereupon the commander would at once appropriate the herd. As all cattle were paid for by the Stores Department at Mukden, the officers were sometimes not very particular to sift the statements made by the guides. Another method of extracting blackmail, used by the interpreters and guides, was to inform villages that unless they met their demands they (the villagers) would be denounced as Hunhutzes. No wonder that these interpreters became hated by all the country side.

This chapter may end with a version of the cause of the Boxer Rising, which was told me at Mukden by a Scottish missionary who had been thirty years resident in Manchuria. According to my informant, while hatred of Europeans was the underlying motive, the immediate cause of the rising was the Boer War. The Dowager Empress of China apparently had feared England more than any other Power, and reasoned that as the Boers, a small nation, had so easily embarrassed the English, a great nation like China would be able to fight a combination of the European Powers with a chance of success. Hence the Boxer outburst. Russia has been credited with having made a secret treaty with the Chinese, whereby in return for Manchuria being given to her she would help China against all comers elsewhere. If that be so, the Russians during their occupation of Manchuria have hardly

acted in a way to enlist Chinese sympathy. And whatever may have been the attitude of Peking, the original occupation of Manchuria by the troops of the Tsar was most unpopular. The Russian soldiers in Manchuria during the Boxer troubles were called by the Chinese "the rebels," and that period is always referred to by the Chinese as "the year of the Russian Rebellion." The Chinese memory of Blagoveshchensk is tenacious; they do not forget that thousands of their fellow-men, women, and children, were driven into the Amur, to drown, by terror-stricken Cossacks.

CHAPTER XXXI

GETTING READY FOR ANOTHER TRIAL OF STRENGTH

AMONG the visitors to Mukden during November were several from Vladivostok, and, judging by the tales they told, life in that seaport was no more serious than at Kharbin. The arrivals included Captain Eyres, the British naval attaché, who had been to Vladivostok in the hope of witnessing a naval engagement, but had waited in vain. He had, however, seen the damage done to Admiral Jessen's squadron in August by the ships of Admiral Kamimura. The attaché expressed astonishment at the small loss of life on board the Russian ships, when one saw how the cruisers had been hit all over. Kamimura's squadron kept up the fight at a long range, never closing in, and thus two of the Russian boats escaped. The Japanese Admiral, as we know now, was obliged to act as he did owing to insufficiency of coal. It was on this occasion that the *Rurik* was lost. Her steering-gear was smashed, and the ship could only go round in a circle. Surrounded by Kamimura's small and slow vessels she blew herself up. While the news from Vladivostok was of this nature, the reports received from Port Arthur became worse and worse, and to

many in the Manchurian army the fate of the fortress appeared to be sealed.

The Japanese were at this time (November) believed to be concentrating in force at Lin-shin-pu. This was a village directly south of Mukden, near to the railway line, and at this point the two armies were closest to each other. The Russians held one part of the village and the Japanese the other. Large tunnels and deep trenches were constructed by the Russians right into the village. They were lined with sand-bags, and afforded excellent protection from the enemy's fire. The Japanese also had made trenches, and I was assured that so close were the two parties that the Russians could hear the Japanese talking. By tacit agreement the men from either army drew water from the well in the middle of the village without being shot at. Nor was this the only place where such courtesies were exchanged. At Kandolesan both Russian and Japanese soldiers went down to the river for water unarmed. Still it was not safe to place absolute reliance on being unmolested, for during the nights little raids and surprises were frequently organised by one party or the other, and if either combatant considered that the other side had played a mean trick, they "got even" with them when they came to draw water. Free-fights with fists occurred on the river bank more than once.

The accuracy of the Japanese fire on Putiloff's Sopka, which was maintained daily, was extraordinary. Their guns covered the whole hill with *shimosa* shells. The marks of where the

shells fell could be seen distinctly. They made a perfect honeycomb pattern on the ground, layer after layer being systematically worked out. Being very strongly entrenched, the Russian loss from this continuous firing was not great. Similarly at Kandolesan the Japanese shelled the camp with *shimosa*. When the bombardment began there was much confusion at first, then everyone ran into their *zemliankes*, like rabbits bolting into their holes, and in those shelters waited till the storm of shot and shell ceased. The fact was, each army was so well entrenched that any offensive movement in strength was certain to entail enormous loss of life, and with the terrible results of the last battle deeply impressed on their minds, neither army seemed anxious to take a decisive step. The Russians massed their men closely in the firing line, while the Japanese were posted in more extended order. A well-known foreign military attaché informed me that, in his opinion, neither army could risk an attack without a preponderance of force. Owing to the more extended formation of the Japanese, that preponderance, if on their side, would give them greater strength on the flanks than the Russians, with their close formation, were likely to obtain. As far as it was possible to ascertain, reinforcements were arriving for the Japanese in about the same time and numbers as for the Russians, though, as usual, accurate information of what the foe was doing could not be obtained, despite the attempts of the Cossack to penetrate within the enemy's lines. So for the present the two armies

sat waiting and watching each other. Still everyone knew that sooner or later another big battle must be fought, and General Kuropatkin was untiring in his efforts to prepare for the coming blow. An important addition to the Russian resources was made available by the completion on the 17th of November of the railway from Mukden to the Fushun coal mines, whence it was now easy to draw large supplies for the railway services.

Heavy firing at nightfall on the 18th November startled me. Such firing during this period did not usually denote an infantry attack, but on this occasion the artillery fire was a prelude to an assault on Putiloff's Sopka. A battalion of Japanese attacked the hill in force and succeeded in getting within 30 yards of the Russian trenches, where they were stopped by the enemy's fire, and retreated, leaving, according to the Russians, 100 dead behind. The attack was obviously made, not with an intention of capturing the position, but to ascertain the strength and disposition of the Russians on the hill. The firing by the defenders lasted but six minutes, and was at such close range that the bodies of the Japanese slain were riddled with bullets. Most of the rifles picked up were smashed. Many fights of this nature occurred along the extensive front, and were thought of little account; the army generally only learned of them through the official gazette.

General Putiloff, who remained in command of the height he had captured, was an extremely energetic man, and was very proud of what he called "my hill," and ever ready to show round

any visitors and recount the story of the Russian victory. It is said that when Admiral Skrydloff visited him on his way home from Vladivostok, Putiloff had arranged to have a small fight for the Admiral's benefit, but that General Kuropatkin, anxious for the safety of his guests, had given strict injunctions to his aide-de-camp, who accompanied Skrydloff, not to run any risks. So, much to Putiloff's chagrin, the fight had to be abandoned.

In pursuance of his plan to have everything ready for the next trial of strength, General Kuropatkin ordered branch lines of railway to be constructed between Mukden and the front of the army, and these lines were put in hand at the end of November. They proved of very great advantage in the supply of food and ammunition to the army, and facilitated the movements of the staff and of all those having to go between the various posts. The Commander-in-Chief removed his headquarters to Shansamutung, a station on the Fushun line a little south of the Hun-ho. One could now take the train from Mukden to Fushun or the front, just as a city man leaves London after a hard day's work for his home in the suburbs. Officers would come into the town in the morning, do some shopping, dine at a restaurant, and return to their posts at night. At the attachés dining-car, which was drawn up at the principal railway station, it was said that one could meet half St. Petersburg society. The whole plain between Mukden and the main position of the army came to resemble the suburbs of a city. The roads

were thoroughly relaid and much widened, lamps were placed along them, as well as big white posts to guide travellers, and by the sides of the roads were many store depôts, artillery parks, and hospitals—a strange transformation of the country-side. One might forget, in going about these roads, that a war was in progress, so orderly and calm was the life, until the booming of the big guns by the Sha-ho brought back to one's mind the grim reality.

On the 24th of November the foreign correspondents and the American attachés at Mukden celebrated Thanksgiving Day right royally. Our Chinese cooks combined to give us an excellent meal, and the dining-room was made gay with American and British flags. Soon afterwards the ranks of both correspondents and attachés became much thinned. On the 1st of December, to my great regret, my good friends Colonel Waters, the British military attaché, and Mr. Maurice Baring of the *Morning Post*, left for England. Colonel Waters had seen practically all the fighting up to the time of his departure, and few men know the Russian army better. Mr. Baring had also always been where fighting was to be seen, and he won the affectionate regard alike of his fellow-correspondents and of the Russian officers. We bade the Colonel and Mr. Baring farewell with sorrow. Two American attachés also returned at this time, together with M. de la Salle of the Agence Havas, an experienced campaigner and a good comrade. Truly the happy party of "war-look-see-men" was breaking up.

CHAPTER XXXII

REORGANISING THE ARMY IN THE FIELD

On the 1st of December General Rennenkampf, at the head of a considerable body of Cossacks, started from the east on a reconnaisance in force, to ascertain the exact extent and position of the Japanese right flank. Rennenkampf's movement was at first successful, but, elated by the defeat of a mixed body of the enemy's cavalry and infantry, the Russian general pressed too far forward, and finding himself in the presence of a much superior force was compelled to retire hurriedly. However, he brought back as trophies of his prowess close on 100 prisoners. These prisoners were well and warmly clad, and their appearance was in direct contradiction to the reports which had gained credence among the Russians, that the Japanese were very badly off for winter clothing. It had been constantly stated by the Russians that their foes would be unable to withstand the excessive cold of the Manchurian winter as well as they (the Russians) could, but the wish was evidently father to the thought. I could not help pointing out to the officers who talked so assuredly on this matter, that during the Chino-Japanese War of 1894 the Islanders

had fought with ease in the Liao-tung peninsula right through the bitterly cold winter. And, as the event proved, the Japanese found the winter now no more trying than their opponents. Thus another of the many theories put forward by the Russians during the campaign broke down.

At this period a reorganisation of the Russian army in Manchuria was in progress. Admiral Alexeieff having been recalled to Russia, the entire direction of affairs cast on General Kuropatkin was held to necessitate a rearrangement of the other commands. At the Sha-ho, as we have seen, there had been an eastern army and a western army and a central force of one corps. These designations were now to be altered into the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Manchurian armies, and as reinforcements came in these armies became more powerful, both in men and guns, than the three commands at the Sha-ho. To the reorganised armies new commanders were appointed. General Linievitch, one of the three new commanders, had however already been engaged in the war. As commander of the forces in the Vladivostok district he had done creditably all that could be done with the troops at his disposal, and had more than once annoyed the Japanese by raids into North-east Korea. He was now transferred to Manchuria, and had journeyed to the front *viâ* Kharbin. Pending the putting of the new system into force Linievitch established himself at Hoanchantze, Kuropatkin's old headquarters. The First Army, of which he was to assume the chieftainship, was Stackelberg's old

command, the Eastern Army, temporarily in charge of General Sassulitch. The centre had been assigned to Kaulbars and was to be known as the Third Manchurian Army. Bilderling's old command, transferred into the Second Manchurian Army, still formed the Russian right; the command of it was assigned to General Grippenberg. Kaulbars and Grippenberg had to come from Russia to take up their posts, and did not arrive till some time after Linievitch had joined General Kuropatkin. Very shortly after his arrival I chanced to be the guest of General Linievitch. Capt. Eyres, R.N., desiring a post where he would have better chances of seeing things than at Vladivostok, had been attached to the staff of the 3rd Siberian Army Corps, and I had volunteered to pilot him to his destination. We stayed on our way at Hoanchantze, where General Linievitch entertained us with cordial hospitality. Linievitch, who has since obtained the supreme command of the Russian forces in Manchuria, is a man of about seventy, strong and vigorous for his age, an open, frank-spoken man, loved and respected by his men, whom he treats in a kind fatherly fashion, cracking jokes with them, and generally making them feel that their interests are his. He had been in command of the Russian forces in Manchuria during the Boxer troubles, and was well acquainted with the country.

On the day (December 2nd) that Capt. Eyres and I rode to Hoanchantze the guns were steadily firing in the direction of Putiloff's Sopka. We

ascended a big hill which overlooked the camp, and from which the captain obtained a good view of the Japanese position. At Hoanchantze I met several old friends, including General Harkevitch, who had been Quartermaster-General to General Kuropatkin, and who had now become chief of the staff to General Linievitch. From him I learned that the consumption of food and forage of the troops assigned to the 1st Manchurian Army was 220,000 *poods* per day. As a Russian pood equals 36 lbs. English weight, it will be seen that the task of supplying the whole army, and not Linievitch's command alone, must have been one of enormous difficulty and demanding the most careful management. The next morning Capt. Eyres and I continued our journey to Kandolesan, where General Sassulitch was still in command. Many members of the staff were away on short leave at Mukden or elsewhere, and General Sassulitch expressed the opinion that there would be no serious fighting for some time yet. This was, however, the period when several adventurous young officers distinguished themselves by crossing the Sha-ho at night with a few men and, entering the Japanese lines, annoying the enemy by blowing up stores or even houses in which soldiers were billeted. The Japanese were supposed to dislike greatly these little *plaisanteries*, but they retaliated in kind, and usually managed, I believe, to "get their own back." Save for little entertainments of this nature, the life at Kandolesan and its neighbourhood was uneventful; at Putiloff's Sopka, and

away towards the west, the conditions were certainly more exciting.

Life at Kandolesan tended indeed to be dull, at least it must have been so for the majority of officers and men. The weather was too cold for parades, and military routine was relaxed. The men had occasional rifle practice, and they were more or less busy fortifying the position; but after a time this was made as strong as it could possibly be. The soldiers who could read did so, but they were a very small minority. Unfortunately for the foreigners attached to the staff, the literature was nearly all Russian, and few of the correspondents could master that, the most difficult of European languages. However, as I was the only foreigner on the staff of the 1st Siberian Army Corps, the complaint is perhaps a selfish one. The arrival of the mail, the receipt of letters or papers from home, was hailed by all with great rejoicing, and made the camp happy for a whole day. In the lack of other occupation card-playing was indulged in, and in some regiments very large sums of money changed hands. The staff of the 1st Siberian Army Corps, throughout the period I was associated with it, was however never idle; Baron Stackelberg always impressed on his officers the necessity of working hard and attending to their duties to the last minutiæ, and with them cards were only played as a relaxation after the toils of the day.

In describing the daily round at Kandolesan I have neglected Captain Eyres, whose journey

did not end there, but at the headquarters of the 3rd Siberian Army Corps, which were six miles away. Thither we went on the 4th of December, arriving at the very instant when a large party was sitting down to a luncheon given in honour of the conferment of the St. George's Cross on Lieutenant-General Ivanoff, who commanded the corps. Among the party were all the recipients of the same Cross stationed in the neighbourhood, and many officers of high rank. We two Englishmen were invited to join the party, and we did so, sitting down to table at eleven o'clock in the morning. But what a luncheon! Surely never has a function of this sort lasted longer, for it was nine o'clock at night before we could leave the hall. Many were the healths drunk and the speeches made; indeed, before it was all over, nearly every one of the 150 guests seemed to have made a speech. Many of the officers present spoke perfect English, and it may here be noted that, in my experience, when a Russian speaks our language he does so better than other foreigners, and with scarce a trace of accent. Although the North Sea "incident," and its consequences, were still fresh in the minds of every Russian, great hospitality was shown to the representative of the naval might of Britain and to myself. Cordial good fellowship was expressed, distinguished officers like Generals Ivanoff and Kastalinsky doing all they could to make us feel at home.

The toast of "The British Navy" was received with acclamation, Captain Eyres making a graceful

reply in Russian. The speech of the day was that made by General Ivanoff, in which he referred to the courage, endurance, and magnificent discipline of his troops, without which discipline, he pointed out, they could have achieved nothing. Ivanoff had indeed a corps of which to be proud. The 3rd Siberian Army Corps had ever fought with the utmost gallantry, and numbered among its regiments the famous 12th Siberian Rifles, who were present in almost every battle from that of the Yalu onward. In compliment to their fine record the infant Tsarevitch had been nominated Colonel-in-Chief of this regiment—an honour well bestowed.

All the while the speech-making continued the champagne had been flowing freely, mingled with vodke and the wines of France, and misgivings as to reaching the blankets on my *kang* in the neighbouring village assailed me. However, the inn was reached safely, though I turned in very uncertain as to what my head would feel like next day. My fears were groundless. I awoke in the morning as fresh as a lark. The corps staff and Captain Eyres started to make a tour of the outpost line and to take part in another Gargantuan meal, this second luncheon being given to commemorate the promotion to the rank of Major-General of Colonel Schwerin, commandant of the artillery of the corps. Fearing a repetition of the over-generous hospitality of the previous day, I declined the invitation to accompany the party, and rode back to Mukden, a distance of some 50 miles. I had,

moreover, previously visited the outpost line of the 3rd Siberian Army Corps. Among the places held was Beaneapudze. The village stood but 300 to 400 yards from the Japanese lines. It was occupied by a few men posted in the houses, and sheltered by thick walls from the Japanese "snipers," who kept a sharp watch on every movement in the village, rendering it a most dangerous place to visit in the daytime. On the farther side of the river one could see the Japanese, who again held the trenches which they had hastily evacuated at the beginning of the battle of the Sha-ho. On the hills which I had visited six weeks before, and where there were then only gun emplacements, guns were now mounted, and these occasionally shelled our position on this side of the stream. At one point the Russians had massed forty guns.

When I reached Mukden late that night it was to find that most of the other newspaper men had gone home during my absence. At the "correspondents' *phanza*" as the Russians called it, only two were left besides myself—one a Frenchman and one a German. A few other correspondents were scattered in various parts of the city. The following day (December 6th) heavy firing was again heard in Mukden; it was not the big battle unexpectedly precipitated, but was occasioned by the 17th Army Corps making a demonstration.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE RUSSIANS IN WINTER QUARTERS

By the end of the first week in December the cold had become intense. The ground was frost-bound to a depth of several feet, while the ice on the rivers was sufficiently strong to bear the very heaviest guns or transport. The common costume of the soldiers now, a costume which I and other foreigners with the army adopted, included fur-lined breeches, high boots lined with felt, thick cloth overcoats lined with sheepskin, and a fur or sheepskin hat called a *papaha*, as well as a hood of sheepskin, termed in Russian *barshlick*. In this dress I could not be distinguished from a Russian soldier, save for the red brassard, the badge of the war correspondent, on my arm. Winter in Manchuria is, however, a deceptive season, as I found on my next visit to the front, on which occasion I was accompanied by Mr. M'Cormick, an American gentleman, who also represented Reuter's Agency. (Mr. M'Cormick had lived in Peking a considerable time, and spoke Chinese well.) The sun was shining brightly and the day was so fine that I did not bother to get myself a sufficiently thick pair of gloves. Half an hour afterwards I had good reason to regret bitterly

my carelessness, for my hands became perfectly lifeless, and I could no longer hold my pony's reins. It was with difficulty that I managed to get my fingers warm again. The fact is that people unaccustomed to the climate are usually deceived by brilliant sunshine, and forget at the start the bitter cutting wind which neutralises the effect of the sun. Nothing but the thickest furs suffice to protect one on a long march. The Chinese cart drivers, hardened as they may be to the severities of the winter, find it necessary to wear ear-flaps, made with one side much longer than the other, and adjusted so that the longer side affords protection against the prevailing wind.

On the ride with Mr. M'Cormick we passed near Erdago. From its geographical position this place was naturally, as the reader will remember, a weak spot in the defences of the Eastern Army, but by hard work the Russians had done much to remedy this defect. In front of the position many thousands of yards of barbed wire had been spread, and the ground was honeycombed with *trous-de-loups*. From Erdago we passed on to Kandolesan, whence Mr. M'Cormick continued his journey to General Rennenkampf's position far away in the hills to the east. I remained at Kandolesan with the staff of the Eastern Army, which was to be broken up very shortly on the arrival of General Linievitch.

This was an excellent opportunity to observe the army in its winter quarters. Not only was the ground frozen hard, it was covered in a mantle of snow. In general the aspect of the country was

bleak and barren, affording few signs of life. As a matter of fact, the army had gone to earth; the majority of the troops had become troglodytes. Here and there in the hills and plains behind the entrenched positions were whole villages of underground dwellings. They were not absolutely beneath the surface, for the gabled roofs of the *zemliankes*, as these dug-outs were called, projected above the level, and gave them a means of ventilation. These roofs, made of timber and sods, stood some few feet above the surface, were provided with windows, and from them rose miniature chimneys. The appearance of these villages or camps are singular and interesting. Viewed from a distance they looked like so many mounds of earth, from which wreaths of blue smoke curled up to heaven. The *zemlianke* villages differed from each other as stars differ in magnitude. One could always tell the encampment of a smart regiment by a glance at the dug-outs. These would be made in perfectly regular lines, and by the side of each *zemlianke* a whitewashed stone placed, and little fir trees planted in between. These avenues of firs and stones gave a very effective appearance to the camps. Besides the large camps, other *zemliankes* were built just behind the trenches for the use of the soldiers not actually on outpost duty. This was a great boon, enabling the men to warm themselves and cook their meals in comfort.

The *zemliankes* generally held from 8 to 16 men. Their earthen floor and sides were covered with matting, and whatever the cold outside, it was

always beautifully warm in the dug-outs. Some of them were luxuriously furnished, and all had stoves. When the stoves were alight, as they generally were, they caused the hard ground to thaw, and the atmosphere was consequently very damp as well as close. I asked a doctor if these dug-outs were healthy, and his reply was, "*Faut de mieux.*" Besides their underground dwellings, each regiment was provided with baths (the Russian baths are similar in construction to Turkish baths); but these lacked cooling rooms, and the bather sat outside in the snow to get cool. It was a sufficiently ludicrous sight, but no one, so far as I know, ever felt the worse for sitting in the snow "mid nodings on." Besides this careful attention for the comfort of the men, underground stables were built for the horses. This seemed almost superfluous, as both Cossack and Chinese ponies can be kept in the open without covering and without catching cold. Their coats become very long, and this affords them protection. Forage being scarce, the horses were often on short commons. The Trans-Siberian Railway was wanted for so many purposes that little forage was received from the north, and the resources of the country were well-nigh exhausted. Foraging parties were out daily to get what they could, but often the horses were reduced to living on *kowliang* stalks. The stalks seemed hard and unappetising, but the ponies got accustomed—they had no choice—to their meagre diet.[1]

[1] Not only forage but fuel was very scarce at this time. Fuel was a more expensive item than either provisions or lodgings.

The trenches of the Eastern Army had been very well designed, and were now completed, as well as the emplacements for the guns, which were carefully hidden and protected. Roads had been made in every direction to facilitate the moving of the artillery, and, as has been already pointed out, the whole position was one of vast strength, very much stronger, indeed, than the lines held by the Russians at Liao-Yang. I could not help being struck with this fact as I visited point after point in company with my good friend Colonel Polteratski of the 12th Regiment, an officer who was in the Peking Relief Expedition of 1900, when he won the St. George's Cross for conspicuous bravery.

Looking across the Sha-ho one could see the Japanese, not more than 1500 yards away, calmly walking about smoking cigarettes. Their appearance did not create the impression of an eager wish to resume hostilities. The enemy had their dug-outs too, and in them they also passed much time. It was curious to reflect that thousands of troops had suddenly disappeared underground, where they passed their days comfortably. The winter seemed to have dropped its mantle of pure snow over the earth, in order to cover up the signs of the blood and misery which both hill and plain had witnessed. Its iron grip imposed at least a temporary peace on the combatants. If either army had advanced, the ground was so solidly frozen that new positions could not be entrenched, and the troops would have been without cover. So there was this period of rest for the weary, of

strengthening for the weak, and of restoration of spirits to the depressed. It was a welcome relief, and, instead of thinking of fighting, one wondered whether the cook would do his best for dinner. The cook of the staff at Kandolesan was a very disappointing fellow, and gave us the same preparation of beef day after day; it really was too bad, considering the trouble the staff had taken to bring him from Warsaw.

An amusing incident happened one morning when I was making the rounds with Colonel Polteratski. We had gone close to Beaneapudze, wishing to examine a new type of *zemlianke*, and the officer commanding the battalion came up to greet us. However, on learning that I was an Englishman he nearly fainted. He spoke earnestly to the colonel for some minutes, evidently objecting to my presence, but allowed himself to be persuaded that I was not a dangerous person. Afterwards the colonel told me that the officer in question thought it a very risky proceeding to let me see the position, considering my nationality. The Englishman might, said this officer, inform the enemy of what he had seen; "at any rate," he added, "I wash my hands of the responsibility of letting him walk through my lines." Colonel Polteratski was good enough to say to his suspicious comrade that I was a fairly respectable person, and attached to General Stackelberg's staff. What information of value the battalion officer thought I should gain by looking at a row of dug-outs it is difficult to imagine.

The headquarters staff of the Eastern Army broke up on the 14th of December, when General Linievitch took over the command, and the army was renamed the First Manchurian. General Sassulitch and Baron Brinken, the former Chief-of-Staff, returned to their respective corps, as did also the other officers. I parted from them with great regret. They had shown me much kindness and hospitality, and I had never been allowed to pay for anything at their mess. The orderly whom General Stackelberg had placed at my disposal, Private Masquisovitch, had also to return to his regiment. The good fellow kissed my hand and cried bitterly when we parted, and I was deeply touched. He had been an excellent servant, indeed a friend. The old staff being broken up, I determined to return to Mukden for the time being. I found the roads dreadfully slippery, and my pony made slow progress. He collected balls of snow in his hoofs, and these speedily froze. My efforts to remove these frozen masses of snow were quite unavailing, and their presence caused the pony to fall down repeatedly. At length I had to give up all idea of riding him, and I reached Mukden on foot.

CHAPTER XXXIV

CHRISTMAS REJOICINGS—THE FALL OF PORT ARTHUR

It was about this period, the middle of December, that I rode out to Kuchiatze, a village in the plain between Mukden and the Sha-ho, to visit my friend Count Apraxin, who, as the reader may remember, was in charge of the hospital of St. Eugene in which Middleton had been so tenderly cared for during his fatal illness. The hospital had shifted its quarters as occasion required, and had proved extremely useful. It was a model of cleanliness and comfort. The wounded were in tents resembling those used in the field-hospitals in the South African campaign, but they were superior to the British tents, being provided with double flies and lined with felt. The tents had, moreover, windows fitted with glass, across which neat curtains were drawn. There was no difference in the accommodation for officers and men; all the tents had a warm and snug appearance. The hospital had also excellent baths and a church—cleanliness and godliness went together here, though among the Russian popes are some whose sanctity could not be gauged by any hygienic

standard. It happened to be Sunday when my visit was paid to St. Eugene's, and the popes (or priests) were busy going from patient to patient who sought spiritual consolation and who were too ill to attend the service in church. I was kindly greeted by the priests who had buried Middleton, and whose goodness on that occasion I well remembered. Chatting with one of them, he told me that during the bombardment of Liao-Yang a shell from a Japanese big gun had fallen between him and a nurse not ten yards away. Fortunately the shell did not explode but buried itself in the earth, so that instead of being killed they were only covered with mud. During that bombardment both doctors and nursing sisters had worked on under fire, and several of them were now wearing the St. George's medal, bestowed upon them by General Kuropatkin in recognition of their services in the cause of humanity. The noble and unselfish manner in which the hospital sisters worked evoked my deepest admiration. They devoted themselves heart and soul to their patients, and seemed unmindful of the dangers and privations they were often called upon to endure. There were, it is true, a few unworthy women among them, but these were an insignificant minority. The stories current in many Russian and foreign newspapers concerning the conduct of the sisters were nearly all vile fabrications.

On this occasion I was taken round the hospital by Count Apraxin, who drew my attention to the interesting cases. Several patients were suffering

from anthrax, or what is known in Russia as Siberian plague. These men were believed to have contracted their illness through wearing *shubas* (greatcoats) made of sheep skins infected with the germs of the disease. These patients were carefully isolated. Sufférers from Siberian plague, I was told, rarely recovered. There were in the hospital a number of cases of a malignant form of typhoid. The doctors stated that there were far more serious cases of typhoid in the winter than in the summer. I saw many hospitals besides this of St. Eugene, and though the cases of sickness were numerous the proportion of illness was far less than in the British army during the Boer War. Considering the privations endured and the alternation between torrid and arctic weather experienced, the health of the Russian army was remarkably good.

The efforts made to fill up the depleted ranks of the army since the Sha-ho battle were very successful. By the 19th of December, exactly two months since the battle ended, 85,000 reservists without regimental impedimenta had been received, and fresh troops were coming from Europe. The army on this date was announced to be over 250,000 strong. The officers looked at this great host and felt more confident as to the issue of the next battle; the very elaborate preparations that Kuropatkin made all indicated a determination to leave nothing undone which might help toward success when the next great contest came. At the front the Japanese remained quiescent, while the

Russians now showed an inclination to bombard the Japanese at every chance afforded them. The inaction of the Japanese was attributed in part to the alleged withdrawal of a large proportion of their army to press the attack on Port Arthur. Stories turning on the siege and blockade of that fortress were numerous; I relate one which demonstrates the suspicion with which the Russian officers regarded the action of England. Reports were constantly circulated that the Japanese battleship *Yashima* had been sunk by a mine off Port Arthur, but no one could ascertain her true fate.[1] The Russians believed the ship was at the bottom of the sea, but were not sure about it. However, said they, it will make no difference. The "they" in this case means the more unreasoning and ignorant of the Russian officers, those whose ideas of the rules of neutrality and foreign politics were slight. In a knowing voice men of this stamp would avow that the *Ocean*, a British battleship on the China station, was a sister ship to the *Yashima*, that the *Ocean* had been sold to the Japanese, and that she would take part in the next naval engagement as the *Yashima*. It was as impossible to persuade these people that such a thing could not happen, as it was to convince them that the torpedo boats in the North Sea were merely phantoms of the imagination of over-excited officers. It was with

[1] On the 31st of May 1905—after the destruction of Rozhdestvensky's fleet by Admiral Togo—the Navy Department at Tokio admitted that the *Yashima* had been sunk by a mine on the 14th of May 1904 while blockading Port Arthur.

these people another instance of the perfidy of England. This distrust of England contrasts strongly with the cordiality shown to individual Englishmen; the Russians and the English when thrown together get on remarkably well, and one cannot help regretting that the two nations are not better acquainted.

The time passed pleasantly enough, and Christmas came and we kept it with good cheer, killing and eating the fatted goose. The old adage that "Christmas comes but once a year," if strictly true, did not appear to be so with us, for we celebrated two Christmases within a fortnight, the Russian festival falling thirteen days later than ours. It was at this time that a stroke of luck enabled me to borrow a shot-gun and a few cartridges, and with one of the Austrian attachés for companion I made frequent excursions into the surrounding country, going close up to the Sha-ho position. We organised a band of beaters among the Chinese boys, whom we armed with sticks; the biggest boy became head-keeper. These lads possessed great intelligence, and took genuine pleasure in the sport, rivalling any of their western confrères in the knowledge of how to beat a cover properly. It seemed strange to bag a brace of partridges or quail, and to hear at the same time the loud boom of the cannon close at hand. Hares, quail, partridges, pheasants, sand-grouse, and bustard fell to our guns, and once we shot a fox behind the head-quarters of the 17th Corps. Many a general's *menu* was agreeably diversified by our sporting

expeditions, which proved most enjoyable. General Sir Montague Gerard, chief of the British Mission with the Russian army, took great interest in these trips. Sir Montague is a prince among sportsmen, and has killed more tigers than any man living. He has had a most distinguished career in the army, and the Russian officers were proud to have him among them. With them, with the numerous military attachés, and with all who came in contact with him, he was deservedly popular. To him I owe my happiest days in Manchuria.

The Russian Christmas was celebrated with great festivities; many dinner parties were given and many healths drunk. The soldiers gave themselves up to carousings, to dance, and to song; but at the same time a watchful eye was kept on the Japanese, it being thought that the enemy would signalise the occasion by making an attack. No attack, however, was delivered, and the army was left to enjoy itself and to revel in letters and newspapers from home. The 1st Siberian Army Corps had special cause for rejoicing in the return to the command of General Stackelberg, now restored to health and as energetic as ever. The Baron found the corps in a state of high efficiency, and its ranks filled up by reservists. Its condition was mainly due to the efforts of Major-General Kondratovitch, who insisted on there being rifle practice on a large scale, an important point which seemed to be neglected by many corps. Baron Stackelberg was beloved by his men, and his return gave an added zest to their festivities.

It was at this season of Noël that the army in Manchuria heard of the final act in the great drama at Port Arthur. It cannot be said that the news was unexpected, for we had learned of the successive capture of important positions by the Japanese under General Nogi, how High Metre Hill had been wrested from the Russians at the end of November, and the ships in the harbour sunk, and how about a month later Erhlingshan Fort had been captured. The *Army Gazette* had told us of these disasters, and that the fall of the Port was inevitable, yet when, hard on the news about Erhlingshan, came the tidings that the city had been surrendered, many and bitter were the comments on the conduct of General Stössel. The army was hoping, or at least trying to make itself believe, that it was still possible through its efforts to relieve Port Arthur, and they had credited General Stössel's statements that he would resist to the death. Hence arose the feeling of deep mortification. General Kuropatkin was greatly perturbed by the news, which would naturally have a considerable effect on the future conduct of the war. He cancelled all his engagements for the next four or five days, and would see no one save his chief military subordinates.

CHAPTER XXXV

MISCHENKO'S RAID ON NUICHWANG

If one may judge by events, the fall of Port Arthur decided General Kuropatkin to adopt an active policy. There was an obvious advantage in striking a blow before Marshal Oyama could be reinforced by the troops under General Nogi (of which more in the next chapter), and a success for the Russian arms would do something to counteract the effect of the surrender of Stössel with his garrison of over 40,000 and 546 guns. It is also possible that the fact that the Berlin bankers were hesitating about the issue of the loan of £25,000,000, desired by Russia, may have had its influence; it was constantly rumoured that political considerations had much to do with military decisions. Be these things as they may, something daring and picturesque was arranged, namely, the great Cossack raid on Nuichwang and Yinkow by General Mischenko. It was organised in the early days of January. Mischenko was posted on the extreme right of the Russian army, and when he organised his raid to harass the enemy's line of communications he determined to take his force right to the Liao River, which was

nominally the limit of the theatre of war, and which was considerably to the west of the left flank of the Japanese. By following the course of the Liao-ho south, Nuichwang is reached in about 120 miles from Mukden. Both Nuichwang and Yinkow (the port of Nuichwang—the places are a few miles distant from each other) were supposed to be held by a weak force, and if they could be captured, and the railway from Nuichwang destroyed, serious annoyance would be caused to Marshal Oyama. It will be seen that the idea of the raid was excellent. From Nuichwang, it must be remembered, the Japanese were drawing supplies from China, just as at that period the Russians got supplies from the same country, and largely over the same rails, *viâ* Sinminting, a town just west of the Liao-ho, and less than forty miles from Mukden. Before Mischenko's raid there had been attempts to destroy the railway south of Liao-Yang, but only by small parties of Cossacks—never more than a couple of sotnias—and these attempts had all ended in failure.

Mischenko now took the field (January 10th) with from 7000 to 10,000 cavalry and several batteries of horse artillery, marching parallel with and close to the Liao, so as to avoid a collision with the Japanese left flank. After the first day's march he divided his force into three columns, sending one party east to cut the railway south of Liao-Yang, and a second to destroy the line lower down at Hai-Cheng. With the major portion of his command he continued his march

on Nuichwang. That night he camped about four or five miles outside the town and made no attempt to enter it, although he had received information from Chinese sources that the place was held by a very weak Japanese garrison. The Japanese, however, had not been idle. The officer in command at Nuichwang, as soon as he learned of the approach of the Cossacks, had telegraphed for aid to Dalny and other places where strong garrisons were stationed; and, while Mischenko slept outside the town, Japanese reinforcements, which had not more than a hundred miles or so to come, and with the railway at their disposal, poured in.

At daylight General Mischenko attacked Nuichwang, but the opportunity to seize it had been let slip, and the Cossack leader found both it and Yinkow strongly held. There was nothing left for him but to retire as rapidly as possible, and this he did, without effecting any more damage to the Japanese than the burning of some forage stores. The forces sent to Liao-Yang and Hai-Cheng met with no more success than did the main party; a few rails, easily replaced, were removed, and that is all. Not a single bridge was blown up, and it is by the destruction of bridges alone that a railway line can be seriously damaged. The removal of rails is only effective in so far that the next train passing along may be wrecked, supposing the driver does not detect the injury done and pull up in time.

While Mischenko was retiring on the Russian

position a combined force of Japanese and Hunhutzes lay in wait and ambushed the Cossacks, who lost a considerable number of men, and who were obliged to hasten their retreat. The whole raid had been mismanaged, and although I am told that it was considered in Europe to have been a very fine and successful achievement, it was in reality an utter failure. This failure was attributable to a variety of causes. To start with, General Mischenko was cumbered with far too many pack-horses, carrying a quite unnecessary amount of transport, for the country they traversed (untouched as yet by the war) would have provided plenty of food for the troops for the few days the raid was to last. Again, the time taken to reach Nuichwang was longer than necessary, and then came the unaccountable halt which gave the Japanese time to bring up reinforcements. In short, the Cossacks again gave an exhibition of their general uselessness as scouts and raiders.

In mass formation, and for the shock tactics for which they are trained, the Cossacks are no doubt magnificent, and they are certainly wonderful horsemen; but in the present war they have had no opportunity of showing their capabilities in this respect. They felt that they had a distinct grievance against the Japanese on this ground. As one cavalry officer put it to me, "Our cavalry is no good out here, because the Japanese have none." The Japanese were certainly not strong in cavalry, and their generals were too wise to draw them up in the open for the Cossacks to charge, but what

cavalry the foe had appears to have fulfilled its object. This is more than can be said of the Cossack regiments.

For ten or twelve days after the return of Mischenko nothing of importance happened. Generals Grippenberg and Kaulbars had arrived from Europe, as well as a number of 6-inch guns. The guns were sent to the positions at the Sha-ho, the majority being massed together, so that when the time came they could pour a terrific fire on the Japanese centre at Shi-li-ho, where a large proportion of the Japanese reserves were supposed to be, besides much stores. With the guns came more and more troops, and these were assigned to the various armies, now definitely constituted.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE BATTLE OF SANDEPU

THE Russian position in the third week of January this year presented a very long front. On the east it extended for many miles along the Sha-ho, so as to protect Fushun from flank attack. Going west it followed practically the river as far as the railway, which cut the centre of the Russian lines. A little west of the railway, at Lin-shin-pu, the Sha-ho, which is a small stream, takes a decided bend south-west, eventually joining the Tai-tze-ho. Leaving the Sha-ho at this bend the Russian lines struck across country to the Hun-ho, the large affluent of the Liao-ho, which after passing Mukden flows south and west. Crossing the Hun-ho the Russians had a position at Zifonti, their outposts extending north and west to the Liao-ho at Sinminting. Thus the Russian lines were in the shape of a bow, with Mukden behind and equidistant from the two ends. On the right or western flank were Mischenko and Kosagovsky with their cavalry. Between them and the railway was Grippenberg's Second Manchurian Army, with its headquarters at Zifonti; Kaulbars held the centre, and Linievitch the east. From Linievitch's or the

First Manchurian Army the well-tried 1st Siberian Army Corps under Baron Stackelberg had been sent to strengthen Grippenberg's army, which consisted largely of European corps. At this period the force under General Kuropatkin's command was some 400,000 strong, and had about 2000 guns. All stores had been amply replenished, and the branch railway lines from Mukden to the Sha-ho were finished. In short, the Russian preparations for battle were complete, and the only deterrent to fighting was the hard weather. On the other hand, the position of the Japanese was extremely strong. They held no fewer than three fortified lines—the first along the Sha-ho, and, on the west, the left bank of the Hun-ho; the second at Yentai (this position had been made very strong); and the third at Liao-Yang. West of the railway the Japanese first line stretched, as has been said, to the Hun-ho, and here the village of Sandepu formed the key of their position. This left wing was under the command of General Oku. Strong as was the Japanese army, it was known to the Russians that it would soon be strengthened by the addition of General Nogi's veterans from Port Arthur. Nogi's force was reckoned by the Russians at 65,000 men and many big guns, and, as I have already hinted, General Kuropatkin seemed anxious to take the offensive before Marshal Oyama was reinforced by this force of Nogi's.

I had ridden out one day to Shansamutung, General Kuropatkin's headquarters, to be received by the Commander-in-Chief. Unfortunately, when

I arrived it was to find that His Excellency had been obliged to leave. My errand was nevertheless far from fruitless, as I learned from members of the staff that on the following day an advance was to be made. This was indeed news, of which not the slightest hint had been allowed to be known in the army generally. According to the information now given me, the battle was to be begun by the Second Manchurian Army (Grippenberg's) crossing the Hun-ho and endeavouring to turn the Japanese left flank. When this turning movement had been carried out, the centre under Kaulbars and the left under Linievitch were also to attack the Japanese. Such was the story told me. Since the fight then impending, and which is now known to the Japanese as the battle of Hei-kau-tai and to the Russians as the battle of Sandepu, other versions of General Kuropatkin's intentions have been circulated. To this point we shall return later on. I considered myself very fortunate to have heard of the impending movement in time, and was pleased when one of General Kuropatkin's aides-de-camp told me that if I cared to return to headquarters at 6 a.m. he would conduct me to my corps. I packed my kit that night, taking nothing that I could not carry on my saddle, and by six in the morning was back at headquarters. The aide-de-camp was as good as his word, and we were soon on the road to Zifonti. It may be explained that whenever a big battle was expected General Kuropatkin sent to each corps a staff officer, who drew up a report on the work of the

corps for the benefit of the Commander-in-Chief. As we went on, we passed General Kaulbars' headquarters, and saw a large quantity of transport going westward. I ventured to ask my companion whether he really thought that a battle was to be fought, or whether the impending operations were intended merely as a reconnaissance in force to ascertain the strength of the Japanese left flank. To this the aide-de-camp replied that General Kuropatkin had made up his mind to fight a decisive engagement and to drive the Japanese out of their position on the Sha-ho. From Kaulbars' headquarters we rode on westward, the day being bitterly cold, to those of General Grippenberg. Branch lines of railway ran to the headquarters of both generals, who were provided with special trains, in which they lived as a rule. We reached General Grippenberg's train as the general was about to leave for the front on horseback. The commander of the Second Army was a grey-bearded man of medium height, and a face full of seriousness, as, with map before them, he discussed matters with his chief of staff. His staff had just arrived from Europe, and I never saw soldiers who had so heavily encumbered themselves with baggage as had these men. Having ascertained the exact position occupied by the 1st Siberian Army Corps, the corps we were seeking, we rode on, but it was dark ere we reached Zifonti; and then, instead of finding Stackelberg's men, as we had anticipated, we learned that the corps had marched off, with the intention of attacking the enemy at

daylight. We decided to stay in the village till 2 a.m., and then continue our march. We were very tired after our 80 versts (55 miles) ride. Before turning in that evening, I discussed the situation with several Russian officers round a roaring fire, which was much needed to keep out the cold. The officers seemed highly pleased at the prospects of the fight, and, getting down the map, pointed out, with significant looks, that we were not so far from Liao-Yang.

The voice of a Cossack orderly roused us in good time, and we rode on. The sky was, fortunately, clear, and we found without much difficulty the village in which Baron Stackelberg had his headquarters. One could not help noting that in this district the villages, which were very large, bore a prosperous look, and were full of grain and forage. The war had hitherto not affected them, and they were still tenanted by the Chinese. A broad ditch and high mud walls surrounded every village—as a protection against the Hunhutzes, presumably, for the neighbourhood abounded in those gentry. The country here was a wide, flat plain, with many villages and a good deal of timber, while low sand-hills diversified the landscape, still in its white mantle of snow.

Stackelberg was within a mile of the outer line of villages held by the Japanese, and at dawn the 1st Siberian Army Corps advanced to the attack of the enemy's position. I joined the 1st Division under Lieut.-General Gerngross; on our left was General Kondratovitch with his 9th Division; on

his left were the 8th and 16th Army Corps—corps which now fought their first action in this war. With these corps was General Grippenberg. On our right, that is to the west, were Generals Mischenko and Kosagovsky and their Cossacks. It was a grey morning and snow was falling heavily, making it extremely difficult to see far in front of one. In these conditions the battle began.

After a brisk fight we drove back the Japanese outposts and captured two villages. Directly afterwards I rode into one of these villages. On the ground, their still warm blood dyeing the snow crimson, lay the dead—both Russian and Japanese. One Russian infantryman, with a dark hole in his chest, lay side by side with a Japanese, whose head had been completely shattered. The dead, the blood-stained snow, the quaint houses, the dark mass of infantry sheltering behind the mud walls—for the enemy had begun to shell us—combined to make a picture of war rarely seen; one worthy the brush of a Verestchagan or a Detaille, and which words of mine are able but feebly to depict.

Two batteries of Russian artillery came into action and the Japanese gunners were soon silenced. All the day the fight went on, with snow underfoot and snow still falling. The 1st Siberian Army Corps continued to make progress, and several more villages fell into their hands. Away to the right, large masses of Cossacks could be made out moving forward, and on the left one could tell from the firing that the 8th Army Corps was also engaging the enemy. From the direction of the railway

line I thought I detected the boom of big guns, and concluded that Kaulbars was shelling the Japanese centre. Towards evening I rode over to where General Kondratovitch was posted and watched the 9th Division "at work." Night fell, and I had to spend it in the open wrapped in my greatcoat, a poor protection against the biting cold of a Manchurian winter. Besides the intense cold, I suffered from hunger, being unable to get anything to eat save some *kowliang*, which I secured from some Chinese. My experience was that of many of the Russian soldiers. Many were unable to obtain a roof to shelter under.

On the following day the battle was renewed with great fury. The 1st Siberian Army Corps were now close to the Japanese position, but they were unable to make further progress. For some unknown reason the artillery did not come into action till late in the afternoon, and by that time the corps was in a most precarious position. The 9th Division had advanced on a line of villages held by the enemy in great force. The snow was falling fast and the troops were in close formation, when suddenly the Russians were assailed by a terrific rifle and machine gun fire. The 33rd and 34th Siberian Rifle Regiments bravely struggled against the hail of lead, but were cut to pieces and forced to retire. General Kondratovitch was severely wounded in the chest, and had to be borne from the field, while his chief of staff was shot in the head. Thereupon the 9th Division fell into a state of chaos, and it was only through the efforts of the

1st Division and of the artillery that it was rescued from its desperate position. The corps made a fatal mistake in not using its artillery to better purpose; but no words can praise too highly the gallantry and persistency shown by the infantry in their advance. Caught as the 9th Division was in close formation, and having to stand such an appalling fire, its losses in a very short time were enormous. An officer afterwards told me, as illustrative of the fierceness of the fire, that one of his men had his head almost cut off by the rain of bullets from a machine gun. The fact is, I believe, that the 1st Siberian Army Corps, elated by their success during the previous day's fighting, imagined that they had already turned the Japanese left, or that it was weakly held, and on the second day advanced without due caution. The 1st Siberian Army Corps had sustained heavy loss in every battle since Wa-fang-ho, and such a brave corps deserved a better fate than that which befel it.

As with Stackelberg's corps, so it was with the Cossacks. On the right, Mischenko and Kosagovsky pushed some troops up to and across the Hun-ho; but General Mischenko was wounded in the foot, and eventually both divisions were driven back. But, on our left, greater success had attended the Russian advance. General Grippenberg, crossing the Hun-ho at a place called Changtan, on the first day (January 25th) succeeded in capturing the village of Hei-kau-tai, a little west of Sandepu. Here Grippenberg mounted thirty guns, and did his best to make his

position secure. At the same time his troops threatened and almost surrounded Sandepu. On the 26th the Japanese were engaged all day in endeavouring to retake Hei-kau-tai and save Sandepu. The 8th and 10th Army Corps, like the 1st Siberian Army Corps, had suffered severely in attacking the villages held by the enemy. The high walls and deep trenches of these villages afforded magnificent defensive positions, and although the Russian batteries kept up a heavy shrapnel fire on them, it was without the effect desired. On their part the Japanese gunners knocked to pieces with their *shimosa* shells the villages held by the Russians, who had no high explosive shells wherewith to reply. A sad feature of the fighting was the frightful suffering of the wounded. For hours they lay on the field unattended, the ambulance arrangements having broken down through faulty orders. The ambulance waggons were sent to villages where they were not needed, and, when they did reach the field, no one knew whither the wounded were to be taken. Meantime the frost and snow to which the men were exposed increased the agony caused by their wounds. Indeed, the tortures endured by these men is beyond description—many a soldier, who would have recovered in the summer, now died of frost-bite. How serious might be the consequences of exposure to the cold I was myself to experience. As on the night before, I could get no shelter this night, and had to pass it in the open with the thermometer about 10° below freez-

ing. I became ill; my temperature indicated high fever, and although the battle was not ended I was obliged to return forthwith to Mukden.

On the third day of the battle General Grippenberg improved his position, and almost surrounded the Japanese at Sandepu. It looked as if the Russians had a chance of winning. On January 28th there was further desperate fighting, and on the night of that day the Japanese again assaulted Hei-kau-tai. They lost very heavily, but pressed home the attack, and at nine o'clock on the morning of January 29th re-occupied the village. That virtually ended the fight, and by the evening of the same day the Russians were everywhere in retreat, and hotly pursued by their foe. For several days afterwards there was more or less severe fighting of an indefinite character, but it did not materially alter the situation. The Russians had suffered another heavy reverse. Grippenberg's army was very sore over its defeat, every man in it felt that they had been badly "left" by the rest of the Russian forces. Neither Kaulbars nor Linievitch had moved a man or fired a gun to relieve the pressure on the Second Army, if we except a slight and ineffectual artillery demonstration by Kaulbars on the opening day of the battle. Grippenberg had been allowed to fight a lone hand, and this fact struck everyone of us as most extraordinary. Fully 20,000 men out of a force of about 85,000 had been killed or wounded; and when it was known throughout the army that these casualties had been incurred in a battle fought and lost by

the right wing, absolutely unsupported, a very painful feeling was created. For Stackelberg's corps much commiseration was expressed; "that unfortunate 1st Siberian Army Corps" was the universal remark. General Kuropatkin left his quarters at Shansamutung and returned to Mukden, where he visited the hospitals and spoke words of encouragement to the wounded. His looks were even more eloquent than words, for his face at this time bore an expression of sadness and sympathy which required no translation into speech.

For the next few days the nature and cause of the disaster at Sandepu formed the universal topic of conversation. A complete mystery seemed to envelope it, and though many startling stories were told, no credence could be placed in any of them. One theory was that the Commander-in-Chief had never intended to fight a general action, and that Grippenberg had risked more than he should have done. Another opinion was that the Second Army's failure was entirely due to want of support. A third statement was that, when Grippenberg was on the point of victory, Kuropatkin, having learned how the 1st Siberian Army Corps had been cut up, ordered a retreat of the whole of the Second Army. All that was patent was that a gigantic mistake had been made by some one. The intention to fight had been kept so secret that not one of the military attachés had any inkling of it, and none were with Grippenberg. Nor—excepting myself and one other correspondent, who was staying with General Mischenko—were there any onlookers

present at all. Many officers were at Mukden on leave, and knew nothing of what was happening until the sound of heavy firing told that a battle was in progress. A more extraordinary situation it is impossible to conceive.

Suddenly the news came that General Grippenberg had sent in his resignation, and followed it up by immediately starting on his return to Russia. Such behaviour at such a critical period evoked a good deal of unfriendly comment. One thing everybody confidently affirmed, namely, that there had been "an awful row" over Sandepu between General Kuropatkin and the chiefs of the three armies. What actually happened it is impossible to say, but Grippenberg's abrupt departure is evidence sufficient of the gravest differences between officers whose cordial co-operation was essential for the welfare of the army.

The battle of Sandepu had a most deplorable effect on the whole Russian army. The work of three months and more of reorganising the forces since the battle of the Sha-ho was almost entirely thrown away. Prior to the defeat of Grippenberg the army had recovered its tone. There were officers, more thoughtful and better informed than the majority, who still had misgivings as to the ability of the Russian army to reverse Liao-Yang and the Sha-ho, but they did not affect the general spirit. The men, well clothed and well fed, cheered by the presence of new comrades, had enjoyed a long rest, and were full of courage. Guns, ammunition, and supplies had arrived in plenty,

and confidence in the future was almost universal. Then came Sandepu, with its disastrous ending: over 20,000 casualties, the *morale* of the men greatly weakened, and, worst of all, acute dissension caused in the ranks of the superior officers. All this had a most depressing effect, and it is beyond question that the defeat of Sandepu was one of the chief causes of the subsequent rout of the Russians at Mukden. For it is not only the effect of the battle on the beaten that must be considered; Sandepu had an equally important effect on the victors. Besides giving the Japanese an opportunity of ascertaining (and strengthening) the weak spots in their western position, it filled them with elation, increasing their self-confidence and the belief in their power of defeating the foe on any and every occasion. The Russians had certainly played into the hands of their enemy; it may be doubted whether the Japanese could have wished for anything better, even if the formation of the Russian plan of attack had been left to them.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE RUSSIAN OVERTHROW AT MUKDEN

My little establishment at Mukden was broken up on the 3rd of February, and I had to refuse the repeated requests of my Chinese servant that he might accompany me home.

Obliged to return to England, for private reasons, I left the Manchu capital within three weeks of the opening of the battle of Mukden. At the beginning of February, however, no one knew when the next blow would be struck, though it was almost certain the Japanese would take the initiative before long. The journey of some 200 miles from Mukden to Kharbin occupied five days, which is eloquent testimony to the congestion of the line. Between the two towns were then the great base hospitals for the Russians, notably those at Kaiyuan and Guntzuling. I passed during those five days many hospital trains, bearing westward thousands of the wounded from Sandepu. They had to be constantly shunted to make way for the densely packed troop trains coming eastward from Russia. The country, especially north of Kaiyuan, was very barren and exceptionally cold, even for a Manchurian winter. On reaching

Kharbin (where I had to remain some ten days owing to illness) we learned that the railway line had been broken the day before near Guntzuling by a mixed body of Japanese cavalry and Hunhutzes, while, on the day following, a strong force of Japanese cavalry surrounded a party of 300 Russians engaged in protecting the line, and killed or captured almost every man. The enemy also captured a gun, and succeeded in partly destroying a railway bridge. Both the bridge and the line were repaired in a few hours, but these sudden and successful raids perturbed the Russians. Up to that period the line had hardly been damaged, the attempts made having been almost invariably frustrated by the vigilance of the Frontier Guards. But now the Japanese seemed bent on emulating the achievements of General Mischenko in his raid on Nuichwang and Yinkow, and on making a better job of their business than did the Cossack leader of his. As the Russians themselves put it, "they are going to give us yet another lesson of how things ought to be done successfully." At this time also two regiments of Japanese cavalry were reported to be but eight miles east of Kharbin. The strength of the garrison—nine battalions with sufficient artillery—rendered it improbable that any serious attempt would be made by a raiding party on the Sungari bridge or on the town. The presence of these scouts so far behind the Russian right flank was, however, indicative of the strength of the Japanese on the west, and of the great turning movement which the armies of Generals Nogi and

Oku were preparing. There was considerable excitement at Kharbin in those mid-February days. Reinforcements were streaming in and being sent forward, and great stores of ammunition were accumulating, Kharbin possessing an arsenal in which shells were manufactured. Meantime at the front General Kuropatkin was endeavouring to repair the bad impression created by the fiasco at Sandepu; while the plans of the Japanese for a smashing blow at their foe were well-nigh completed.

The battle of Mukden began on February 23rd, while I was on my way west across Siberia. Details of the fighting were hard to obtain, eager as everyone was for information. At Moscow and at St. Petersburg the news given out was more scanty than that which the public in England obtained. Intimately acquainted with the scene of the battle, and knowing well the force engaged on the Russian side, the accounts of the struggle conveyed a more vivid impression, perhaps, to me than to those who had not been privileged to pass nine months as the guest of the Russian army in the field. The battle in its broad outlines was a repetition of the fight at Liao-Yang. Everything, however, was on a more gigantic scale—there was a vastly more extended front, and probably double the number of combatants. The force at Kuropatkin's disposal was well over 350,000, reckoning only the troops at the front or at Mukden in reserve, while Marshal Oyama had as many, if not more, soldiers under him. So that some three-quarters of a million men were engaged

in this battle, or series of battles, for the fighting, reckoning only to the date on which the Japanese entered Mukden, lasted fifteen days. The first movement was made by Kawamura against the Russian left, and on February 24th General Kuroki—considered by the Russians the most redoubtable of their opponents—began his attack on the entrenchments in which the First Manchurian Army, under General Linievitch, was posted. A day or two later Nodzu opened a fierce bombardment of the Russian centre, while on February 28th Oku's army began to advance across the Hun-ho. This was the weak spot in the Russian defence. The *morale* of the Second Manchurian Army had been badly shaken by its repulse at Sandepu, and when it was assailed by General Oku's troops, with a fierceness and intensity which could not be exceeded, it gave way, being compelled to retreat on to the railway and the defences round Mukden. The Japanese had been well advised in striking the Russian right with all their might, for they knew that this part of their enemy's force could not have recovered from the severe mauling it had received when Grippenberg made his disastrous attack.

At the same time that Oku's army delivered its blow, General Nogi and his veterans from Port Arthur were sweeping north-west across the plains of the Liao-ho, and on the following day (March 1st) the Japanese entered Sinminting. Besides cutting off from the Russians a very important source of supply for contraband from China,

General Nogi by this move obtained a position from which the Russian line of communication behind Mukden could be threatened. The next five days the great fight raged in every part of the field. The stubbornness with which the Russians defended their positions was equalled by the persistency with which the Japanese pressed their attack. Marshal Oyama was clearly endeavouring to surround the Russian host, a task of immense difficulty. The reader will have learned from previous chapters how immensely strong were the positions held by the Russians, and soldiers who could force them are surely unsurpassable in courage and tenacity. The issue was in doubt until the 5th of March, on which day General Kuroki forced the left of the Russian entrenchments on the Sha-ho. Meanwhile Nogi had advanced northward from Sinminting, and was almost up to the railway. To General Kuropatkin it now seemed that, if he were not to be caught in the Japanese vice, Mukden must be abandoned, and on the 7th of March the order for a general retreat was given. The day following, Nogi cut the railway north of Mukden, and the only question remaining was the extent of the Japanese victory. The Russian left, under Linievitch, had fallen back on Fushun, where it was being followed by Kawamura's army, the new force which Japan had organised since the battle of the Sha-ho, and which gave them the necessary preponderance on their right flank. Kuroki's troops were now between Linievitch and Mukden, and when on March 10th

Kawamura carried the Fushun position, Linievitch was obliged to retreat direct to Tieling. On the same day Mukden was entered by the victorious Japanese; as the troops of the Mikado marched in, the prestige of Russia in China vanished.

For another week the pursuit continued, the Japanese pressing the enemy hard. Russians and Japanese were at one time marching in parallel lines, and Kuroki's artillery poured shrapnel upon the columns of the enemy with terrible effect. But, with all their efforts, the Japanese generals failed to "round-up" Kuropatkin, and though Tieling was occupied on the 16th of March, the bulk of the Russian army had succeeded in escaping north. The casualties, however, had been enormous, and on the Russian side alone reached something like 140,000, or more than a third of their entire force. Mukden may well claim to be the greatest battle ever fought. That Kuropatkin realised the enormous loss a battle would entail, is shown by the fact that, in anticipation of the attack which he was contemplating when the Japanese took the offensive, he ordered the hospitals to prepare to receive 70,000 wounded. The sufferings caused by the retreat cannot be exaggerated. It must be remembered that the weather remained intensely cold, and that the arrangements for collecting the wounded were all disorganised. Hundreds of poor fellows must have perished from frost-bite. Defeat, it may be added, was wholly unexpected by the Manchurian Army. And that view was shared by the foreign attachés and the war cor-

respondents. Whatever their opinions might be as to the possibility of General Kuropatkin marching on Liao-Yang, they felt confident that the Japanese would be unable to turn the Russians out of the positions so long and so carefully prepared. The Japanese accomplished this seemingly impossible task, and the occasion may be seized for an expression of my profound admiration for the marvellous qualities constantly displayed by the forces of Britain's ally in the Far East.

Following on the disaster of Mukden, General Kuropatkin was relieved of his command, exchanging places with General Linievitch. The new Commander-in-Chief fixed his headquarters at Guntzuling, where the shattered army was reformed. It was constantly added to. For instance, while on my way back, I passed, at Irkutsk, part of the 4th European Army Corps on its way to Kharbin. The rate of increase of the Russian troops in Manchuria since February may be taken at an army corps a month. But of the trials of the army under Linievitch it is not my purpose to write. These pages are a record of personal experiences, and the slight and imperfect sketch of the battle of Mukden which this chapter contains is the only important battle mentioned at which I was not present. It must therefore be regarded as a digression, for which I crave the indulgence of my readers. Those who retain any interest in the writer are now asked to bring back their minds to Siberia in winter-time, and to accompany his train across its snow-covered, wind-swept plains.

CHAPTER XXXVIII AND LAST

THE DESIRE OF THE ARMY FOR PEACE

OF the journey from Manchuria homeward little need be said; the country has already been described, and I saw it at much the same season as on my way out to the front, only now there was no sign whatever of spring. It struck me, too, that the arrangements made for the defence of the railway did not compare favourably with the system adopted by the British in South Africa. The Russians had erected no blockhouses, placed no barbed wire entanglements, nor dug any trenches even in that part of the line which lay in Chinese territory. The Frontier Guards had sand-bagged the windows of their little stone houses, two or more guns were stationed in redoubts on or near large bridges, and mounted patrols traversed their sections of the line daily. This was the extent of the Russian precautions, and with one or two exceptions they have proved sufficient. From Kharbin to Irkutsk my companions on the train included about 200 Japanese prisoners, among them four officers who were being sent to the prisoners' camp near Nijni Novgorod. They seemed reconciled to their lot, though evidently they did not relish their rations of

black bread and meat. None of the party spoke Russian, but one officer knew English, and I acted as interpreter between them and the Russian commandant, who was anxious to do all he could to render the journey of his charges agreeable. The Japanese officers had provided themselves with Russo-Chinese grammars and dictionaries, and were constantly busy studying Russian. I bade them good-bye at Irkutsk, where one changes trains, and has a choice of the express to Moscow or the ordinary train. The latter takes twenty days to accomplish the journey, but the express managed to cover the distance in seven. I arrived in Moscow penniless and travel-stained; in a costume, in short, which would at once have gained me admittance to the casual ward; but these minor inconveniences a little time suffices to remedy. I became at once painfully conscious of the atmosphere of suspicion which surrounds everyone in Russia, and could but contrast it with the freedom and liberty I had enjoyed in Manchuria. This, however, is a matter on which I have no desire to enlarge.

My story is ended, for it is no part of my purpose to discuss the political situation or to make forecasts which time may falsify even before the indulgent reader has read thus far. A few words as to the feeling of the army in Manchuria and of Russian society towards the great question of peace or war, I permit myself nevertheless to write. As long ago as last February the majority of the officers of the Russian army in the field were in favour of peace, in view of the plain facts of the

case. They had no belief in the prospects of recovering the ground lost. The view of these officers is not likely to have been modified by what has happened since. As to the men, constant defeat has killed enthusiasm; besides, with them the war has been unpopular from the first, and the commonest question put to one by the soldiers was, "You are a stranger, and can take an unbiassed view. When do you think the war will be over?" Nor must it be forgotten that in several corps, notably among the Siberian corps, the ranks have lost all their original complement, and the places have been filled by reservists, mostly married men, who resent being taken away from home and family. One and all of these men pray for the day when the order shall be given for the army to return home. Another factor to be taken into account is, that many men in the ranks have adopted the ideas of the revolutionary parties in Russia. These men, like everyone else in the army, are aware of the discontent and rioting in Russia. The news of what happened was told them freely. The official newspaper published on the field described fully, for instance, the shooting of the workmen in the streets of St. Petersburg on Sunday the 22nd of January. The private soldier in Manchuria, I repeat, desires peace. He bears no enmity against the Japanese, nor does he understand for what the war is being waged. The opposition to peace has come not from the army, but from the governing class in St. Petersburg, and the Bureaucracy in Russia generally. The

contrast between the feeling in Russia and that in Manchuria I found very marked. The official element in the capital refused to recognise that, as far as it is possible to foresee, the Japanese will always be able to maintain in the field a force fully equal to that which the Russians can keep in Manchuria. They have realised the danger of bringing a discontented army back to Russia, and have hoped, fervently hoped, that by a superhuman effort the army would win one great victory, and thus enable them to escape from the situation "with honour." Such is official Russia—prepared to gamble away men's lives in an endeavour to save its own face. But among the middle classes, notably the merchants, the general voice is in favour of peace. It is urged by this class that millions of roubles have been expended on building the Trans-Siberian Railway, in developing Port Arthur, and in creating Dalny, without any compensating advantage. "Even if Russia should prove victorious and regain those places," argue many merchants, "of what avail will that be? It can only be done by the sacrifice of thousands of valuable lives, and it would be followed by the spending of more millions in rebuilding and developing the ports, for which there will be no commercial return." As an indication of what the Russian peasants think, one may point out that it is chiefly from the peasant class that the army is recruited, and the views of the army are probably its views.

It is of the army that my last words shall be. I have written that it desires peace, that it thinks

victory well-nigh impossible, that its reverses have killed the enthusiasm and spirit which are so essential to the soldier. Moreover, I have had occasion to criticise both the tactics and strategy displayed by the generals in command. All this is true, but it in no wise detracts from the magnificent courage which the army has ever shown, the fortitude it has always exhibited, and the loyalty reposed in its leaders. What other troops in the world would have again and again met the enemy unflinchingly after such terrible reverses? Success has been denied to their arms, but none the less I am glad to have lived among them for nearly a year, to have seen them at work and at play, in circumstances of joy and of sorrow, and under the most trying conditions to have proved the worth of their comradeship. May we never meet again save in the beaten path of friendship!

THE END.

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